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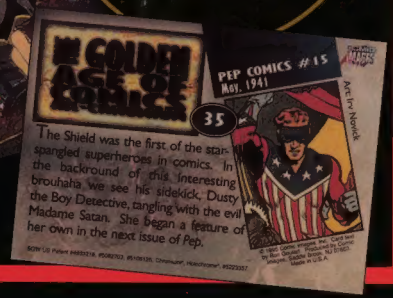
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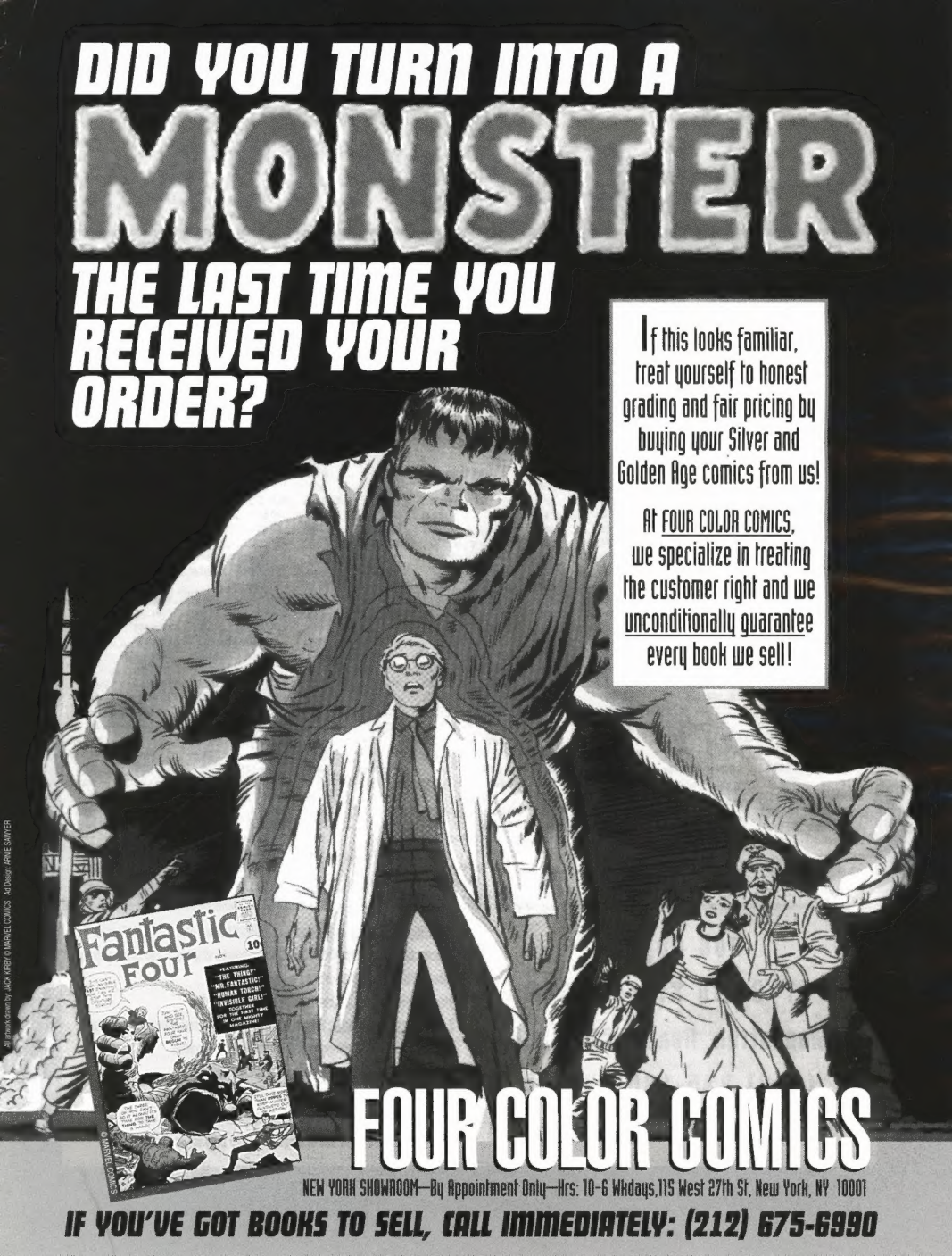

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Issue Number #32, February 1996

THE FAGIOLLA FIND

I am one of those crazy collectors that just love Pedigree books... their history, their structural idiosyncrasies, their mythos... even the detective work required to identify them. My "love affair" with Pedigree copies began one fateful weekend at the dawn of the '70s decade... and I remember it as if it were yesterday. My brother, Lane, and I were attending Weber State College at the time (in northern Utah) where we met fellow comic book collector, Dale Broadhurst. Early one Saturday morning, Dale called to tell us of a large comic find he'd heard about down in Salt Lake City. The three of us hurriedly made the drive, eventually coming to a stop in front of a white Victorian home typical to that part of town.

As I entered the formal living room, I could see that someone had been using all the floor space of nearly every room to sort an amazingly large collection of old (and quite beautiful) comic books. David Fagiolla, the discoverer of the collection, sat at a dining room table (also covered in stacks of books) and was negotiating by phone with Bruce Hamilton... they were haggling about the price of water-stained *Marvel Comics* #1. Next to the phone were neatly stacked piles of *Amazing Mystery Funnies*, the then "legendary" title with rare Wolverton art. We had been seriously collecting for more than 12 years at that time, yet these were the first copies I had ever seen close up, in quantity, and in grade.

At the completion of the phone conversation we made David's acquaintance and indicated that we would like to purchase some of his comics... rattling off a myriad of DC titles that we avidly collected.

Dave led our intrepid trio to the kitchen, pointing to several large boxes (sans tops) on the table. I eagerly fingered the first stack and it took my breath away. *More Fun* #53, 58, 59, 64, 67... *Flash* #1... *Superman Comics* with single digit numbers... *Actions* and *Detectives* from the early '40s... and unobtrusively lying on top of the final stack, the only Silver Age book in the collection... an absolutely spectacular copy of *Showcase* #4.

Every book was in great shape, especially considering the Mile High collection would not set a new standard of grading for several more years) and the check marks throughout many of the interior margins didn't even phase us. These were wonderful books!

We picked out some material, knowing full well that the upward limit of our combined semester budgets was around $300... not a lot in the face of such a bonanza. Even so, we clinched our teeth and steadied for the announcement of prices. Although David had the latest Overstreet, he succinctly ignored it... relying instead on his own pricing instincts.

David cleared his voice and calmly announced "*More Fun* 53, 58, 59, 64, and 67 will be... $12.50 each... *Flash* #1 is ten bucks... and the *Showcase* #4, it's a lot newer than the others so... 50¢ for that." After all the smoke cleared, we spent our $300 (on the nose) and trekked back home with our treasures, penniless and happy.

I never saw David again, but as the years went by, I began hearing about the "Cosmic Aeroplane" copy of this and that, all with those tell-tale check marks. What I never heard (even once) was David's name associated with the collection and I always thought that somehow he deserved at least a modicum of credit for bringing some incredible books into the hands of collectors.

So let me tip my hat to you, David Fagiolla, wherever you may be. Please know that a few of us "ole timers" still give your name a good share of the credit for discovering one of the first Pedigree collections. Although neither you nor I knew it at the time... you were making comic book collecting history.

Gary M. Carter

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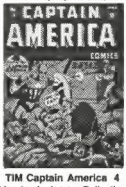

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Jan. 1996

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Gritty, Vengeful Batman?

Found Henry Mietkiewicz's article on Joe Shuster interesting (CBM #22), but noticed what I feel is an error. (This is an observation, not a complaint.)

"Not even the resounding success of the gritty, vengeful Batman-DC Comics' other superstar of the early '40's tempted Shuster (or Siegel) to give Superman a tougher edge."

What is wrong with this passage? First of all, for most of the '40's, Batman was not gritty or vengeful (at least not especially). He was during his first year ('Tec #27-Batman #1), but, as was documented in Bob Kane's autobiography Batman and Me (available from libraries), that was it. An editor decided that Batman should not be as ruthless (after all, small kids were supposed to be reading these comics) as his inspiration, the Shadow. (In fact, Bob Kane had no problem with Batman using guns. After all, The Shadow did. Some people would say, though, that comics are too explicit for the Shadow's antics, and that small children would not enjoy them in this form.) Thus, the Dark Knight grew apart from the Master of Darkness (the Shadow, not Satan). Robin cemented this change.

Second, as noted in Mike Fleischer's The Great Superman Book (a history of Superman), Superman was very violent for his first four years. He didn't use guns (didn't need them), but in Action Comics #2 he threw a military torturer to his death. (We didn't see the man land, but it's safe to say that he died. Along the same lines, Superman once punched a man into the air. The force of the blow was probably enough to kill him.) Superman electrocuted another man, and did other killings. However, as with Batman, DC decided to tone Superman down. (This may have been when Superman's creators were in the army, fighting in World War II. Superboy was created at this time.)

(To digress, this reminds me that many comic book creators were drafted, such as Will Eisner, Joe Shuster, Jerry Siegel, and Jack Kirby.) Those last three remind me of another fact. You see, a fan once objected to Superman's killing of three villains in Superman (second series) #22. In an open letter, this fan stated that Superman agrees with Jesus of Nazareth that we should love our enemies. Superman agrees with Jesus of Nazareth.

Siegel and Shuster were Jews!

Of course, it is possible to be a Jew and not a Judaist. There have been Christian Jews (Disraeli, Milton Berle), an atheist Jew (Marx, Freud), and even a Hindu Jew (Peter Max).

Third, Superman and Batman were not equal in popularity. This is shown in that Superman was licensed for many things that Batman was not. (Batman did get a movie first, but that seems to be it.) Only recently, in the aftermath of the recent animated Batman series, the Adam West Batman series, the recent movies with Pat Hingle and Michael Gough as Alfred and James Gordon respectively, and Frank Miller's Batman work, has Batman caught up with Superman. The Lone Ranger was equal to Superman before Batman became more prominent.

If Batman was only gritty for one year initially, then why did we get the idea otherwise? Well, the Adam West Batman show did not do well among adolescents. After Adam West's show, adolescents were the audience DC wanted. So they wanted to create a version that would be the antithesis of Adam West's version without seriously compromising matters for merchandising and licensing. Now that there are more pre-teen readers (there weren't during the '70's), expect Batman to be less anti-Adam West. (They wanted to make it seem like Batman hadn't been like Adam West's version before that.) (To Warner, who owns DC, comic books mean little. If you look at all the people who have to be paid before DC makes a profit, you'd see why. Movies are another story. Warner wants to make money off of famous franchises like Batman, Wonder Woman, Superman, the Flash, Plastic Man, Green Lantern, the Swamp Thing, Captain Marvel, and maybe Aquaman.)

John McDonagh, Massachusett

Devoted Too Much

I have enjoyed Comic Book Marketplace for several years now. The articles on Disney Ducks, Harvey Horror, Bill Gaines, Enemy Ace, and many other wonderful insights on the hobby of reading comics are the best reading in any magazine on comics. The letters page is informative and should be expanded.

Although Steranko is a good artist, I felt you devoted too much of the issue to him. Running themes in an issue (such as horror, Good Girl art, odd- (*Continued on page 79*)

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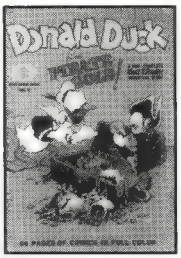

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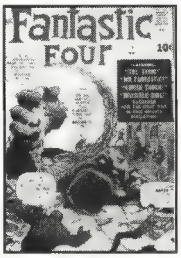

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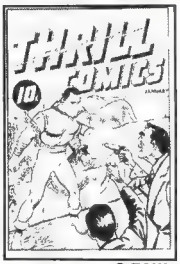

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STRANGE WORLDS!

...SO WHEN KIRBY SHOWED UP AT THE ALL-BUT DORMANT ATLAS, TELLING STAN LEE THAT IT COULD BE DONE AGAIN...HE KNEW WHEREOF HE SPOKE!

BY PAT S. CALHOUN

Oddly enough, the Russians had a hand in launching pre-hero-Marvel, and so did DC. The Ruskies heated up the space race with the Sputnik satellite they shot into orbit in 1957. One result of this was another wave of popularity for the science-fiction genre. And DC, in 1957, published Jack Kirby's *Challengers of the Unknown* to an enthusiastic audience. So when Kirby showed up at the door of the all-but-dormant and maybe-moribund Atlas, telling Stan Lee that it could be done again, he knew whereof he spoke. The post-Code marketplace may have been a smaller pie, but if you could cut yourself a big enough piece...

The herald of the new Marvel-to-be was *Strange Worlds* #1, cover-dated December 1958, and the deluge began in 1959 with *Tales Of Suspense* and *Tales To Astonish* joining *World of Fantasy* and the revived *Journey Into Mystery* and *Strange Tales*. *World Of Fantasy* and *Strange Worlds* both ceased publication with the August 1959 issues, probably because Marvel's distribution contract limited them to a certain number of titles, and they wanted some room to try something else. But *Strange Worlds*, despite lasting only five issues, is the first pre-hero title and therefore a key silver age run.

Thus convinced of this title's importance to comics history, I volunteered for a voyage into alien realms that could easily snap my sanity with their desperate deviations from all we know as true and real. I undertook to chart a pathway through the harrowing heartland of *Strange Worlds*.

Strange Worlds #2 (February 1959) starts that great year with an awesome Steve Ditko sci-fi cover. Inside, "I Was the Scourge of Atlantis", illustrated by Dick Ayers, highlights the ish. This is an intriguing variation on the city that sank into the sea story- rendered in vivid visual terms. The Ditko story (almost every pre-hero issue has one), "Little Lost Planet" is modestly told but handsomely drawn. "I Was a Prisoner on the Planet of Plunder" is an OK yarn whose title shows the kind of alliterative wordplay that would soon combine with the mumbo-jumbo monster names to yield some of the most memorable rhetoric of the silver age. "Planet of Plunder" features art by the late and much-lamented Don Heck, another one of the "stable" of pre-hero creators who gave the books their trademark look.

Strange Worlds #3 (April 1959) has the first cover in the remarkable series of menacing creatures that month after month invaded the America of our (if you are one of the many "baby boomers" who were getting four-color kicks back then) youthful fantasies. The goofy names would come later, but "the Creature From Planet X" was formidable enough- let it however be noted that the mayhem all started with purple prose and a pink monster! Appropriately, this cover was drawn by the king of the monsters, Jack Kirby. Kirby also drew two stories inside- the cover yarn, where a young woman gets locked into the zoo that houses a stranded alien, and "I Fly to the Stars" a ho-hum treatment of the theme of the star pilot whose six-month trip brings him back to an Earth where decades have gone by. Ditko adds some class to the lukewarm plotting of "I was a Human Satellite", but top honors this issue go to "My Job: Catch a Robot". The story is slick enough and the main character is engaging, yet it is unquestionably the art by Joe Sinnott that makes this one happen. Sinnott is one of the key 1950s science fiction artists- with a clean style that has that extra something that pushes it over the top.

Strange Worlds #4 (June 1959) screams into high gear with an excellent Kirby S-F cover for "Manhunt on Mars". The splash panel for the first story is also

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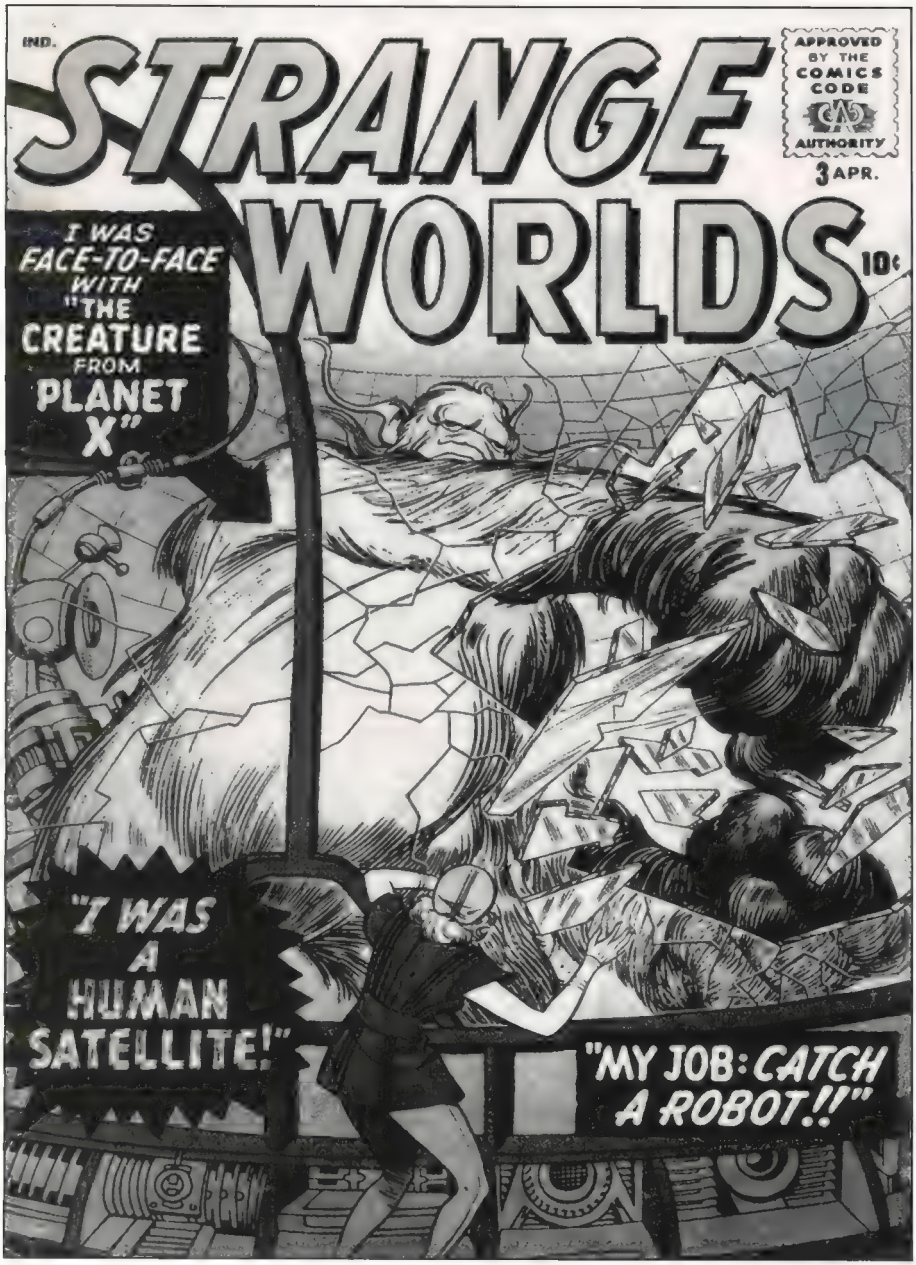
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STRANGE WORLDS
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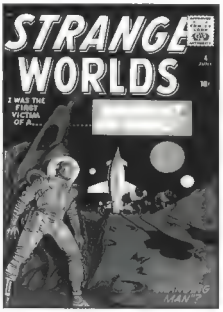
I WAS FACE-TO-FACE WITH "THE CREATURE FROM PLANET X"
"I WAS A HUMAN SATELLITE!"
"MY JOB: CATCH A ROBOT!!"

superb- a Joe Sinnott full-page panorama of the "Journey to Jupiter". The story itself leaves something to be desired- but when Big Joe goes interplanetary- invite me along anyway Next up comes one of my favorite Ditko pre-hero fantasy stories: "A Magician Walks Among Us". Casting "spoiler warnings" to the wind- this is the story of a man who invents a time machine and travels back to the days of King Arthur to discover the truth about Merlin the magician. And, with brilliant inevitability, the time-traveler himself ends up taking on the identity of Merlin, and his knowledge of 20th-century science indeed seems like magic to the people of ancient Camelot.



"The Man Without a Past" is a clever yarn about a robot who imagines itself to be a human with amnesia. It's well told, with some suspense, and "his" robot nature coming as a nice twist at the end. Art is by Paul Reinman, who along with Kirby/Ayers, Ditko, and Heck would go on to form the nucleus of the pre-hero-Marvel bullpen. with each being present in each issue of the four fantasy titles. This is followed by a tale drawn by an artist whose presence usually causes that issue to bear a higher price-tag than the ones around it- Al Williamson. "I Was the Changing Man" is hokum that has a wimpy inventor building a machine that will allow him to take over anyone on Earth's body- the theory being that some rich and famous souls have much more of a life than the dweeby protagonist. But after he takes over a few "most likely to succeed" types, Mr. Helpless finds each of his new lives shooting down the tubes... Masterful plotting it isn't, but there is the elegant art- including a couple of bathing-suited beauties and the nice splash panel of the inventor's disappearance into the mental essence that then drifts around seeking a noggin to crawl into.

"Manhunt on Mars" wraps up this superlative issue; the red planet becomes a weapon in the war against the "earthly Reds" in this extrapolation of the space race that has the Commies shooting off the first rocket to Mars. The rendering of the Martian landscape and the aliens that inhabit it is particularly good- the work of Don Heck.

Strange Worlds #4 shows pre-hero-Marvel at its best. #5 was the last issue of the magazine that spearheaded the revival of the company that would eventually capture the silver crown from DC and reign for many years. The Atlas/ Marvel fantasy titles are among the last noteworthy non-continuing-character anthology-of-short-stories comics of the era that began after World War II; a style of books that for many collectors represents the peak of perfection of the four-color form. ■

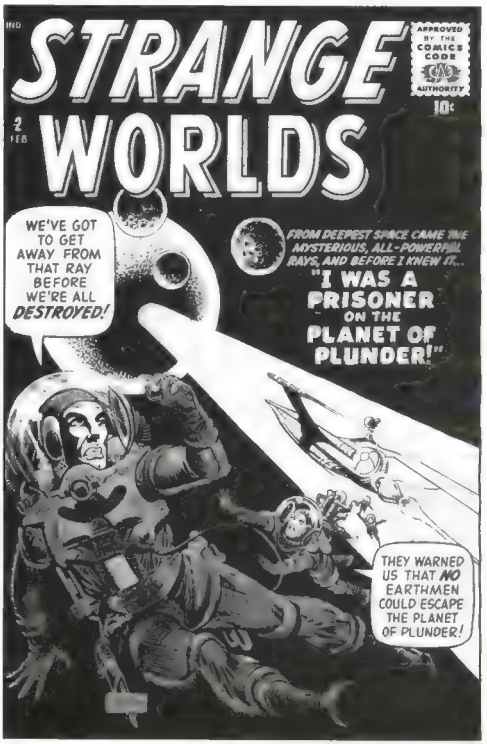
Strange Worlds #3 (Apr 1959) starred - the pink creature from Planet X started the parade of Kirby monsters that would dominate the covers of the "big four" Atlas fantasy titles for the next few years.

Strange Worlds #4 (Jun 1959) offers interplanetary action by the great Jack Kirby on the cover- as a deadly game of hide-and-seek begins between man and Martian.

STRANGE WORLDS © 1995 MEG ARR

Pat S. Calhoun has been collecting, researching, and appreciating comic books since the early 1960s, and is a nationally recognized comic book historian.

Strange Worlds #2 (Feb 1959) features Steve Ditko's first cover for Atlas/Marvel, illustrating "I was a Prisoner on the Planet of Plunder".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WE'VE GOT TO GET AWAY FROM THAT RAY BEFORE WE'RE ALL DESTROYED!
FROM DEEPEST SPACE CAME THE MYSTERIOUS, ALL-POWERFUL RAYS, AND BEFORE I KNEW IT...
"I WAS A PRISONER ON THE PLANET OF PLUNDER!"
THEY WARNED US THAT NO EARTHMEN COULD ESCAPE THE PLANET OF PLUNDER!

Interviewer's note: *WHEN I FIRST BEGAN PURCHASING DC COMICS FROM THE NEWSSTAND DURING THE MIDDLE 1950S, I NOTICED THAT SEVERAL ARTISTS SEEMED TO CENTRALLY DEFINE THE "DC LOOK". I LOVED THE EXQUISITE INKING DETAIL OF RUSS HEATH. I WAS ENTHRALLED BY THE DYNAMIC LINES OF JOE KUBERT. I WONDERED AT THE FUTURISTIC CITIES OF CARMINE*

Even with all of the recent media attention and notoriety, amazingly, Murphy Anderson continues to be soft-spoken, humble, and anxious to make sure everyone else gets their fair share of credit. I have found this to be a rare quality among many comic book creators. At the age of ten, I loved Murphy Anderson for his work... at the age of forty-six, I deeply appreciate him for who he is.

Gary M. Carter: *Murphy, where and when were you born?*

Murphy Anderson: I like to tell people that I was born within a stone's throw of where Thomas Wolfe was born. I was born in Asheville, North Carolina, on July 9, 1926. My wife was also born in 1926. My folks moved to Greensboro when I was about seven years old.

Carter: *What were your earliest recollections of comics?*

Anderson: I was very interested in comics since I can remember. My mother was a schoolteacher, but she wasn't teaching at the time. She taught me how to read by reading the comics to me... mainly in self-defense, she always liked to say (chuckle). She taught me with comics, the Sundays and the dailies.

Carter: *Do you recall any special favorites?*

Anderson: I guess at that time it was "Popeye." I also remember an interest in "Regular Fellows," I think it was called, and the kid-type strips. Most of the small-town newspapers carried the N.E.A. lineup, the paper in our town included. The reason for that, I think, was that the N.E.A. people sold a package of features to various newspapers. They got all their comics, features, and columns, the whole ball of wax, from N.E.A. They could select to run whatever they wanted from the syndicate offerings. As a result, I looked at more of the N.E.A. material than anything else. I especially remember strips like

INFANTINO. THE CLEAN, NEARLY PHOTOGRAPHIC STYLE OF GIL KANE TOOK MY BREATH AWAY. BUT FOR ME, ONE ARTIST'S WORK WAS THE MOST COMPELLING. THAT ARTIST WAS THE GREAT MURPHY ANDERSON. EVEN NOW, WHEN I STARE AT THE ORIGINAL "ATOMIC KNIGHTS" ART PAGE HANGING IN MY DEN, I NEVER FAIL TO MARVEL AT THE UNBELIEVABLE LEVEL OF DETAIL IN EACH BEAUTIFULLY RENDERED PANEL. I'M STILL IN AWE OF THE INTRICACY OF LINE, THE PLACEMENT OF SHADOW, AND THE TRULY SUPERB COMPOSITION OF THE TOTAL PAGE. FOR ME, MURPHY ANDERSON'S WORK IS THE APEX OF THE SILVER AGE. FROM THE FIRST TIME I JOURNEYED THROUGH THE PAGES OF STRANGE ADVENTURES AND MYSTERY IN SPACE... TO THIS VERY DAY, MURPHY ANDERSON CONTINUES TO BE, FAR AND AWAY, MY PERSONAL FAVORITE. BUT BEYOND HIS IMMEASURABLE CONTRIBUTION TO COMICS, I LEARNED SOMETHING ELSE ABOUT MURPHY THAT HE HIMSELF WOULD NOT TELL YOU.

Interview by Gary M. Carter

FROM HAWKMAN TO THE ATOMIC KNIGHTS...

MURPHY ANDERSON

"Boots and Her Buddies," "Out Our Way," and "Major Hoople." These were all N.E.A. I remember the "Toonerville Trolley" was one that I rather liked as a kid. I really remember the first "Li'l Abner" very vividly when it came out. I was very impressed. I couldn't wait for the next day's "Li'l Abner." It was a situation where he was at his swimming hole, and, as I recall, he got hit on the head with a baseball.

Carter: *Were your parents supportive of your reading the comics?*

Anderson: I think so. My mother never really interfered with my reading. She just sort of monitored it. I remember when I brought a science fiction pulp home, I was a little concerned about what she would think about it. It was probably *Amazing Stories* in the late '30's. I learned, to my "amazement," that there were other places to read science fiction than the "Buck Rogers" strip. I remember being so fascinated to find that there were

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THERE SEEMS TO BE A BAND OF RADIATION ALL AROUND THE EDGE OF THE ISLAND! WE'LL HAVE TO PENE-TRATE IT TO GO INTO THE INTERIOR--!
LET'S GO! WE DIDN'T COME THIS FAR TO BE HELD UP BY RADIATION!

magazines that had science fiction stories. I switched to reading them when I was about nine or ten years old. I think one of my neighbors had a pulp magazine, and I started to read a story in it that was science fiction. That was when I first became aware of it. The covers, of course, were terribly fascinating. It was then that I discovered the great Frank R. Paul. He was great. That, incidentally, is why I bought the first *Marvel Comics*. When I saw the cover of the magazine was done by Frank R. Paul, I couldn't resist buying it. I still have that very comic, as a matter of fact. It's pretty dog-eared, but it's intact.

Carter: *How many people can say that they have a copy of* Marvel Comics *#1 that they actually purchased from the newsstand?*

Anderson: I would hope that there were a few of us left. Actually, I wasn't as impressed with the inside of the book as the cover. By 1939, I was already discovering greats like Lou Fine and Will Eisner and the art they were producing. To my way of thinking, what they were doing was truly superior work.

Carter: *What was the very first comic book you ever purchased at the newsstand?*

Anderson: In my area newsstands, as such, were rare. I think there was one downtown from where we lived. When I was a little older I was able to go down there, but when I was nine or ten years old I wasn't allowed to do that sort of thing very much. My parents did get me a subscription to *Tip Top Comics*. That must have been around 1934 or 1935. That's when I became really familiar with "Tarzan." You see, "Tarzan" wasn't carried in our local paper. And I started getting *Famous Funnies* also. I believe I had a subscription to that, too. I also loved The *Open Road For Boys* magazine.

Carter: *Do you remember the first time you saw a DC comic book?*

Anderson: Not a specific recollection, but, of course, when I saw the first *Action Comics* and the first *Superman*, they just knocked me out. I had all of those issues until 1952 or '53, when DC borrowed my collection for their lawsuit with Fawcett.

Carter: *DC borrowed your collection?*

Anderson: Yes, because they didn't have any unbound copies to show as evidence. I never actually got them back, though. They got lost somehow. All my Fawcett and all my DC Superman-related books were gone. I guess you could say that it was the "Murphy Anderson Collection" that was used in the Fawcett suit, but to what degree, I'm not sure. Jack Schiff (who was the editor) was kind of in charge of getting that stuff together. Jack had heard through Julie (Schwartz) that I still had all those old books in my mother's attic down in Greensboro. She dug them out and sent them to me.

Murphy Anderson at the drawing board in 1975. Even during the middle '70s, while fandom was still relatively young, Murphy was consistently honored for his comic book work at fan conventions all over the country.

Carter: *Those books today could be worth a fortune.*

Anderson: Yeah, I know. Jack Schiff still apologizes to me about it. It's just one of those things that got out of his reach. He dug around and found a few copies of books to give me. He asked me if they were mine, but they weren't. I knew they weren't, but as a result, I do have a #2 *Whiz*, February 1940... the Captain Marvel thing where he throws a car on the cover just like Superman did on the cover to *Action* #1.

Carter: *Those covers were very similar.*

Anderson: Apparently the court thought so, too, because Fawcett eventually settled. They went out of the superhero business as a result. But back to earlier years. At the age of thirteen or fourteen, I had discovered Chesler's books like the *Star Ranger Comics*. They were a bit larger than the regular-size comic books that came later. I still have a couple of frag-

ments of those old books, one of which had a Will Eisner drawing in it, by the way. I wrote a little tribute to Will for one of Phil Seuling's conventions back in the early '70's. I dug up my old collection with examples of his work for the article. That one I remembered vividly having the Eisner signature, which was very new at the time it was published.

That had to be around 1936 or '37. I got those books mainly because I spent a week in Raleigh with my father when I was about ten years old. He worked for a taxicab chain. He was a manager in Greensboro, and he did so well there that they sent him down to Raleigh to try to pull that office out of the loss column, which he did. He would come home on weekends. I went back to spend a week with him during the summer, and he bought me all these wonderful comic books. Most don't realize it, but those Chesler books were major comic books of the '36-'37 era.

A little later (because of my interest in writing and cartooning) I gravitated to the journalism classes in high school. At that point in time they only had 11 years of public school. In my final year (when I graduated in the 11th year) the class had the option of staying over for the 12th year. Some of my fellow students did stay, but I didn't. That meant I had only two years of journalism when I could have had three. Toward the end I became co-editor of the paper. It was a great outlet for me to draw editorial cartoons and that sort of thing.

Carter: *When did you realize that you had a talent for drawing?*

Anderson: I don't know if I ever thought about it that way except to feel very inadequate when I looked at the really good stuff. I would try to copy whatever I could learn from it. There was really no place to go to school for that kind of art. I was greatly influenced by Lou Fine, Will Eisner, and, to a slightly lesser degree, Hal Foster and Alex Raymond, because Foster and Raymond weren't as available to me. Jack Kirby was very much around, and while I admired his work and Mort Meskin's, I was never tempted to work in their styles. I guess I was more turned on by the Foster/Raymond style of work. They were so detailed and realistic. At the time, I couldn't quite understand why Kirby drew such "distorted" pictures. Later I realized what he was about. As far as draftsmanship, no one is better than Jack Kirby. There are quite a few around that I would say are as good, obviously, but he evolved his style as a unique way of communicating. It was very effective, and I've always admired that about his work.

Carter: *How did you come to meet some of the artists that you admired?*

Anderson: Well, I had already been in contact with New York publishers through my position on the school newspaper. I had been make-up editor before becoming co-editor of the paper. We had won some prizes for make-up, so we were invited to come to Columbia University, to the Columbia Scholastic Press Convention. Of course, that was a wonderful opportunity for me to call on comic book publishers. On that trip I made a point to meet Lou Fine and Jack Cole… I was in seventh heaven! I had done my version of "The Ray." I had a complete story that I still have stashed away somewhere. Anyway, I showed it to Lou Fine and the others I visited. I got some encouragement, but Lou Fine was too much a gentleman to say anything much. He did say that he "admired" one of the panels, which, by the way, was a dead swipe from one of his! I'm sure he knew it, but everyone was copying him back then, so he didn't make an issue out of it. I met him maybe twice after that. He was a very kind person. I've never heard anything ill about him from anyone. Also, when I was going down the elevator (or maybe it was waiting for the elevator) Jack Cole (or one of

Panels 2 & 3 from page 6… shows Anderson's amazing gift for panel design. These are from "World Out Of Time" published in *Strange Adv.* #129 (Jun 1961, at left). This classic story was originally scheduled for *SA* #128.

the other guys) was quite encouraging to me at the time. They were working for Arnold at Quality Comics and had their offices there. This would have been in early 1943.

On the way to New York, Murphy and his father, Murphy Anderson, Sr. pose at the side of the highway. They were on their way to submit Murphy's work to publishers for the first time.

Carter: *Where did life take you after high school?*

Anderson: I started at the University of North Carolina. It was wartime, and I had just turned seventeen. I started there chiefly because I heard that William Meade Prince was the head of the art department there and taught classes. William Meade Prince was one of the top illustrators of the late '20s and '30s. He had work in most of the major magazines, but a lot of his stuff was in *Country Gentleman* and *Colliers* and that sort of thing. He did a lot of covers and was especially noted for his portrayal of black people. I later learned he was from Chapel Hill. He had returned there during his semi-retirement and took on the chore of being an art professor and headed up the art department. At the same time he was doing a comic strip called "Aladdin Junior." "Aladdin Junior" was a Sunday page. It was written by Les Forgrave, who was the writer/artist of "Big Sister." Forgrave had taken up residence there at the Carolina Inn in order to be close to Prince. He was doing "Big Sister." Someone in Greensboro happened to know him and got an introduction for me. I arranged to visit him, and that's when I decided to try to get into the University of North Carolina, which I did.

Carter: *Was William Meade Prince a good teacher?*

Anderson: William Meade Prince was a wonderful teacher for the two weeks that I had him. He became ill and was out the rest of the year. His substitute was the traditional university-type artist, and I couldn't see spending my time in that kind of class. I dropped out of it and took an additional trigonometry class. However, I kept wanting to try professional work so much that after two quarters I talked to my father about it. He was very much against it, but he saw that I was determined. He gave me $100 to make an effort to get a job in New York. A lot of guys had gone into the service, and they were quite desperate for artists at the time. That's when I was able to get in at Fiction House. That would have been early 1944. Out of that $100 came my hotel, my meals, and my train fare. It was $3 a night at the hotel. But even so, by the time you eat and you've had your subway ride (even though they were a nickel), it ultimately counted up. I pounded the streets. I walked everywhere for a week.

I was just about out of money, and I thought I was going to have to go home. But on Friday, as a last resort, I called on Harry Chesler and he was very kind to me. He said he wasn't publishing anything at that point in time. He said that he thought that I'd be a natural (because of the science fiction content of my samples) to work for Fiction House. I told him I had already called on Fiction House, and Mr. Iger said I should come back in a couple of weeks. "Jerry Iger? That's not Fiction House." He said, "Wait a minute." He picked up the phone and called Jack Byrne, at Fiction House and gave me a really big buildup. He asked if I could get up there in about a half hour. I said I would try. I went and talked to Jack Byrne and he gave

HAWKMAN LIFTS AND FIRES A TINY DISC--THAT EMITS A SERIES OF SHRILL AND PIERCING SOUNDS AS IT CIRCLES TOWARD THE PLUNDERING PHANTOM...
WHAT'S THAT? OHHH! SO YOU ESCAPED MY BOOBY-TRAP AFTER ALL, HAWKMAN?
I DID! NOW IT'S MY TURN TO ENTRAP YOU--IN A WEB OF SOUND WAVES!
BRRRRRRRRR
© 1941 DC

me my first real job. They hired me to come to work on Monday morning. That was my last Friday. The timing of that job just barely saved me from having to go home. So, to this day, I have a soft spot in my heart for Harry Chesler.

Carter: *What was it like working for Fiction House in 1947?*

Anderson: They gave me a "Star Pirate" script. I took it over. It had been drawn by several different artists. George Tuska was the artist who had done it immediately before me. As a matter of fact, I was sitting next to Tuska when they gave me my first desk. He was there for about a week, and then he moved on. George always seemed to be moving on. He was so good he could always find a job anywhere he wanted. If he didn't like the way someone parted his hair one morning, he'd just leave and go to work for someone else.

Carter: *How did World War II affect your situation?*

Anderson: I knew I was going to be drafted very shortly. I had already registered for the draft while I was in New York on my eighteenth birthday.

Carter: *Did you eventually get drafted?*

Anderson: Yes and no. I actually volunteered for immediate induction. It was fortunate that I did. I tried to enlist in the Navy on three different occasions, but I was always turned down because I didn't have 20/20 vision in both eyes (my vision was below Navy standards). At that point, I was awaiting with my fellow draftees at Fort Bragg. A naval officer was picking people for the Navy. He asked how many had gone to college. There was another fellow who had gone two years and I had gone two quarters, so he said he would take the guy with two years. Then he said. "Wait a minute. This man has volunteered for immediate induction. We'll take him." The sergeant sitting beside him said, "His vision doesn't meet the requirements." He looked at the papers and said, "Do you see normally in your right eye?" And I said, "Yes." And he said, "Sergeant, take this man over and check his binocular vision." This meant check both eyes at the same time, which allowed me to pass, so they took me. It wasn't kosher, but I did get in. After the war was over, I reminded them of the problem and they let me out (saving me having to wait several months for discharge). During my "military adventures" I consented to do some freelance work for Fiction House. I did the "Star Pirate" for them. I carried a small drawing board around with me. I had actually worked ahead on the strip before I went into the Navy, so they probably had a year's supply or so when I went in. I worked that far ahead because they only had me working on one strip. I also did a couple of other things that were interesting. I did "Life on Other Worlds," and I did pulp illustrations for their pulp magazines.

© 1965 DC

Carter: *In which pulp magazines were you published?*

Anderson: In pulps like *Planet Stories* and, I think, *Football*, and a couple of other sports magazines. A little later, when I was in the Navy stationed in Chicago, I was able to call on *Amazing Stories* and met Ray Palmer, the editor, in 1945. He gave me some assignments. I also did quite a bit of work for Ziff-Davis after I got out of the Navy. My work at Fiction House ended when I took over the "Buck Rogers" strip in 1947. While working on "Buck," I worked directly for John Flint Dille, who owned the "Buck Rogers" strip as well as the whole syndicate. His grandson, Flint Dille, and his sister still look after "Buck's" fortunes.

© Flint Dille

Carter: *Whom did you work with after you left John Dille?*

Anderson: I moved to North Carolina to manage my Dad's business, but I continued to freelance for Ziff-Davis. I'd been doing pulps for Herman Bollin, the art director, who had taken a liking to me. We got along very well. Then Ziff-Davis decided to go into comic book publishing, and they moved to New York. Herman Bollin was the art director for all of their publications in Chicago (Herman declined the move to New York and stayed behind in Chicago because he said his "roots were too deep there.") He didn't want to move out to New York. He thought that the company was making a mistake. Anyhow, they had hired Jerry Siegel to head up their comic line. Herman Bollin told me about it and asked me if I

Eloquent design combined with superb detail... this is what makes Anderson's Hawkman stories literally spring to life. The Shadow Thief (*Hawkman* #5, Dec/Jan '65) actually seems 2-dimensional against the "3-D" feel of the panels.

Strange Adventures #144 (Sept 1962) has emerged as an important classic in the Murphy Anderson mythos. Featuring the only Atomic Knights cover ever published during the acclaimed series, *SA* #144 astounded and captivated regular readers when

would be interested in doing some work in their new comic book line. He knew my comic book background ("Buck Rogers" and all). I said, "Sure." He set it up. I got a script down in North Carolina from Jerry Siegel. He had written a script called "The Asteroid Witch" in the first *Amazing Adventures*. I've been told by comic book collectors that that particular issue is quite a collector's item. It contained art by Wally Wood, Alex Schomburg, Ogden Whitney, and yours truly. It had all of us in one book. I don't think that any of us knew one another, but it just got published that way. It also had a beautiful Robert Gibson Jones painted cover. If you are familiar with his famous pulp covers, then you can imagine how beautiful it was. He was perhaps their leading cover artist. *Amazing Adventures* got to "borrow" him for a couple of comic book covers. Jones may still be alive, I don't know. He was a fantastic artist in my opinion. There were a number of Chicago-based painters that did work for Ziff-Davis.

Carter: *What was it like to work on a Jerry Siegel script?*

Anderson: It was quite an experience. Jerry and I had quite a long conversation about my work on "Buck Rogers" and, of course, his work on "Superman." Few know it, but that's how "Lars of Mars" was born. It was kind of a combination of Superman and Buck Rogers. Now the secret is out! (Chuckle!) I like to think of him as a friend.

Carter: *When did you first go to work for DC?*

Anderson: In 1950-51. When I started there, my first project was a science fiction story for *Mystery In Space*. I don't believe it was a character. The plot line was a current-day thing with some kind of catastrophe from outer space, as I recall. It was published in either issue #2 or #3. Julie (Schwartz) started giving me all the work I could handle then. I also did some early *Strange Adventures* for Julie. When Julie and I first met, we chatted some. We both knew Ray Palmer, and, of course, our mutual interest in science fiction has cemented our relationship.

Carter: *Who were some of the early science fiction writers that you worked with at DC?*

Anderson: John Broome and Gardner Fox. They wrote most of the stuff that I did. Also Manly Wade Wellman sent in some scripts, and I did some of those. I met Otto Binder (pronounced Bender) a little later. I don't recall Otto writing all that much for Julie. He was mostly doing "Superman" for Mort Weisinger.

Carter: *How did you come to be introduced to the now legendary characters Captain Comet and Chris KL-99?*

Anderson: Captain Comet had already started when I came aboard. Julie wanted me to do it. But before Captain Comet, I did Chris KL-99. KL-99 was written by Edmond Hamilton. And it was a real thrill to work on. It was because (obviously) Chris KL-99 was very similar to Captain Future. I'm sure Captain Comet was inspired by Captain Future as well. I'm sure that Julie felt that Captain Comet would be viable using a somewhat similar approach to the Captain Future concept, an ordinary human with super-mental abilities.

Carter: *What was your first published cover at DC?*

Anderson: I think that it was a Captain Comet cover in *Strange Adventures* with some kind of Bat-like creature on it (eventually published as the cover to *Strange Adventures* #18. I believe that was my first actual comic book cover. You know, Julie kept such complete records that I think his files could tell us for sure. He was a great one for that… he kept very detailed records. He knew who wrote what and when it was assigned, that kind of thing.

Carter: *Did anybody during this period offer you any other hero strips?*

Anderson: I really didn't ask for them, because I probably would have had to work for Mort Weisinger, so I never pursued that at all. He was an OK guy, but back then his reputation was that he was kind of a difficult man to work with. Julie was such an absolute pleasure and the page rates were the same! I liked what I was doing for Julie, so I wasn't tempted to change.

Carter: *When did you first contribute to DC's Silver Age of heroes?*

Anderson: I was doing coves for Julie when I was living in Greensboro in the mid-to-late '50's. The Sputnik satellite went up in '57 and *Showcase* #4 with the Flash had been out for a while. About that time Julie had asked me to do a cover for a new character he had in mind. I worked on the cover on one of my trips to New York, and it was based on an idea that I had in the back of my mind for a while. It was not an idea about a specific character, but an idea about a cover scene. I wanted to try to use

something from literature, basically. It's always stuck in my mind, "The Pit and the Pendulum" bit. We tried to work out a pendulum idea for this new character. I worked up a number of sketches and Julie wasn't really happy with any of them. I said, "Well, look. I think I know what you want." The end of the day was coming and I had a train to catch. I said, "I'll work it up and do it, and if you don't like it, you don't have to use it." He said (very reluctantly), "Well, OK, go ahead." He didn't particularly like it when I sent it to him, and he got Gil Kane to redraw it. That was the source of the first Adam Strange cover eventually published in *Showcase* #17. Gil followed my costume design pretty closely, so in a sense I guess I designed the Adam Strange costume.

Carter: *Were you witness to any of those famous "script development" meetings during that time?*

Anderson: Oh, sure. I would sometimes sit and work at a desk in Julie's office. When I would come in to do work, I would very often hear him work on plots with Gardner (Fox) or John (Broome) or whoever. Not that I participated, but I overheard them and, on occasion, they would ask me for an opinion and so forth. And very often I would go to lunch with Julie and Gardner and they would always continue their plotting conversation during lunch. I would eavesdrop a little and participate a little.

Carter: *Besides your excellent pencils, you are considered by many to be one of the greatest inkers in the business. Who were some of your favorite pencilers to ink over?*

Anderson: I would have to say the easiest person to ink over and the one that I probably enjoyed most was Curt Swan. Also, Gil Kane was very easy to ink over. There wasn't very much for you to do other than just kind of trace it. Carmine Infantino's work could be a challenge at times, because if you tampered with it very much, you could wreck it! It also begged for you to do a few things like straighten out the anatomy here and there. Carmine didn't seem really that interested in anatomy. He was interested more in story telling and panel design. He would often distort a figure on purpose and include unrealistic blacks (shadows just for design purposes). In that way, we weren't in sympathy too much with one another. I wasn't in sympathy with that approach to drawing. Nor was I really in sympathy with Mike Sekowski's style (on JLA) either. I did ink them to the best of my ability when I got the assignment, though.

Carter: *Several of your* Justice League of America *covers are considered by Silver Age collectors to be among the finest of the period and truly "classic" in the best sense of the word. They are the covers to* JLA *#1, #3, and #4.*

Anderson: I penciled and inked from issue #1 to up to about #4 or #5. Drawing all those characters was such a burdensome chore that I asked Julie to let me off the hook! I think Mike (Sekowski) wanted to do more covers anyway. He was somehow managing to do all the work in the rest of the strip, so why not the covers as well. JLA was a horrendously difficult strip to draw! Trying to get those covers to work… to show each character to his or her best advantage… was really hard work. There were so many things that you had to do. So I kept bugging Julie. "Why don't you let Mike pencil them?" About that time he started using Mike on the covers.

Carter: *What was your favorite Silver Age strip at DC?*

Anderson: If you're talking superheroes, I guess I would have to say Hawkman. I was heavily involved in it. If you wanted to bring in the Atomic Knights, I would say I probably enjoyed that even more than Hawkman.

Carter: *I was going to bring up the Atomic Knights only because it's my personal favorite. It was all your pencils and inks, I believe…*

Anderson: Right. I did all the Atomic Knights. And that's true of Hawkman, up until I stopped working on it. Issue #1 through about #18, or something like that.

Carter: *The first six or seven* Hawkman *covers seem to contain an extraordinary amount of detail work. I know you're famous for your detail work, but*

it hit the newsstands on July 28, 1962… its landmark story, "When The Earth Blacked Out!" is still considered one of the all-time classics of the title. In the letter column "Spotlight On *Strange Adventures*" editor Julie Schwartz credits Murphy Anderson with "every SA cover from the August, 1961 issue on".

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BLACK CAT
Starring
CARMEN FARR
DIRECTED BY
TEDDY BURLINGTON
BUT WHO WAS THE REAL BLACK CAT, AND WHERE DID SHE DISAPPEAR TO?
...AND HOW DID I HAPPEN TO BE PICKED AS HER SUCCESSOR?!
GOOD QUESTIONS ALL! AND FOR KIMBERLY STONE AND HER NEW "SECOND LIFE," IT WAS JUST... THE Beginning
MURPHY ANDERSON 1995

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these are amazing!

Anderson: Well, it's just something I wanted to do. I want to work like that. I like to do what is, I feel, the best possible job. I think background is a very important part of story telling. I don't like to slough it off. I try to keep it subdued when it's not the most important thing in the picture, but I still like it to be there so when the reader looks at it… the reader gets all the atmosphere. You should know that the colorists didn't appreciate it too much. They had to color all that detail. I had a couple of sessions with friends of mine who colored my work and I said, "Look, I don't really care to have every item colored. As far as I'm concerned, you can put a monotone over it. It doesn't matter. The main thing is to emphasize the central concept of the panel." After that I think they sort of understood what I was about, and I didn't get that kind of needling anymore.

Carter: *If you were to pick a favorite Silver Age cover that you both penciled and inked, which cover would you choose?*

Anderson: The one that I probably always felt was the most successful was the flying gorilla cover on *Hawkman* #6. Then, of course, I enjoyed *Hawkman* #1 very much, too. I think my opinion of that cover, the flying gorilla cover, is sort of colored by the fact that it was the first Hawkman story that I was able to get the character "off the earth." I still have all the originals for that one. Hawkman was written by Gardner Fox. Gardner wrote them all. John Broome wrote all the Atomic Knights stories. John was really into science fiction. He was a slower writer than Gardner Fox. Gardner was able to really turn the stuff out. John was more deliberate.

Carter: *In some of the* Strange Adventures *letter columns, the idea was tossed around about Atomic Knights getting their own comic book. When I was reading those issues hot off the stands, I was always disappointed that Atomic Knights was never given a tryout in* Showcase *or* Brave And Bold.

Anderson: It had been discussed a number of times. Paul Levitz himself is a fan, I think, of the series, but he's also realistic. He says, "Who would buy it other than a small group of dyed-in-the-wool fans?" But who knows, they keep reprinting stuff and picking things for publication that I think are fairly obscure. Maybe they'll give the Atomic Knights a chance.

Carter: *Which "Atomic Knights" stories do you feel contain your best work?*

Anderson: I think that the "New Orleans" story and the "Molemen" story were probably my best efforts.

Carter: *What happened after the Silver Age began to wane?*

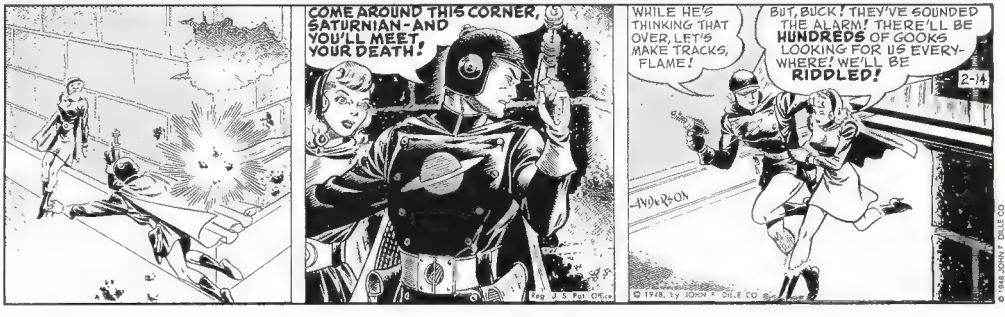
Anderson: I started a studio. It used to be called Murphy Anderson Visual Concepts. We've shortened it just to Visual Concepts, Inc. Actually, I put my name in front of it just for identification. It doesn't give that much value now, but in the past it was fairly well known in the industry. It all started when I worked for Will Eisner in the middle '60s after the Batman phenomenon. I had done so much commercial work on Batman, and I could see the industry sort of settling back into what it had been before. I didn't see much of a future for myself in it. I wanted to get into some different things. Will had an opening. I had talked to him a little bit. He offered me a job. I worked for him for about two and one half years on staff, basically on *PS Magazine*.

Later, he lost the contract to three guys. They couldn't perform, and after two years the government put it out for bid again. At that point they contacted me. I met some of the people, and they let me know it was going up for bid and wanted to know if I was interested. I got a little studio started out here and rented a couple of offices. I put in a

Still in his Navy uniform, a young Murphy Anderson breaks bread at a diner with Helen in 1945.

Below, the original art to one of Anderson's Buck Rogers dailies dated 2-14-48.

Far left, Murphy's latest project with writer Mark Evanier… The Black Cat!


COME AROUND THIS CORNER, SATURNIAN - AND YOU'LL MEET YOUR DEATH!
WHILE HE'S THINKING THAT OVER, LET'S MAKE TRACKS, FLAME!
BUT, BUCK! THEY'VE SOUNDED THE ALARM! THERE'LL BE HUNDREDS OF GOOKS LOOKING FOR US EVERY-WHERE! WE'LL BE RIDDLED!
2-14
ANDERSON
Reg. U.S. Pat. Office
© 1948, by JOHN F. DILE CO.
© 1948 JOHN F DILE CO

bid and managed to be successful. I held the contract for roughly ten years, from 1973 to 1983. It was quite a challenge. Of all the things I ever worked on in my career, I would say that was really the most satisfying.

Carter: *One last question. How did you meet your lovely wife?*

Anderson: While I was stationed in Chicago. I went out to the Servicemen's Center one night (they had a dance every night) and the young ladies that worked there were from the local churches. That particular night I had to check my hat and I was a little bit concerned about its fate and the lovely young lady that checked it for me. So I had to go back and check it periodically… That was 1945. Her name is Helen. We have three children My oldest daughter is Sophie, and she's made us grandparents. Our other daughter is Mary. My son, of course, is Murphy the Third. Sophie was born in '55. Mary's a few years younger and Murph is the youngest.

Carter: *Thank you, Murphy Anderson, for spending the time with us and sharing some of your personal insights.*

Anderson: It was a pleasure, Gary. I enjoyed myself. ■

This interview was originally published in the book Avon Book's Original Comic Art, Identification And Price Guide *by Jerry Weist, and is reprinted here by an initial publishing agreement between Gary M. Carter and Jerry Weist.*

Anderson's satire of the "End Of The World" was published in *Pageant Magazine* (circa 1970). DC characters address the socially relevant issues of women's lib, pollution, mental health, and high fashion on their way to Armageddon.

I CAN'T ⟩CHOKE⟨ DO ANYTHING WHEN I CAN'T ⟩CHOKE⟨ BREATHE! IT'S THIS ⟩CHOKE⟨ POLLUTION!
SORRY! I GOT AN APPOINTMENT WITH MY SHRINK!
CAN'T COVER THE STORY NOW--BE LATE FOR MY WOMEN'S LIB MEETING!
WHAT SHOULD I WEAR TO THE END OF THE WORLD--A MINI--OR A MIDI?
MURPHY ANDERSON

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NOW... IN HIS OWN MAGAZINE! MURPHY ANDERSON'S SILVER AGE HAWK

What kind of feelings do you get when you look at and read a comic book? Do you suddenly feel nostalgic or are you swept up in the action and adventure of the story?

For me comic books have always been a world unto themselves. Each book takes you to a familiar yet different setting, and thrusts you into places that can only come to life through a person's imagination. You can almost hear the characters speaking, each with their own distinct voice. You can almost feel the joy of flying to far off worlds, and relish in the thrill of fighting maniacal despots bent on world domination. What has always helped to instill these feelings on comic fans have been the writers and artists who have used their talents to bring comic book characters to life. The writer's job is more abstract in that he can form a mental picture of what is taking place in the story, but the artist has to take the words of the script and develop them into actual, tangible panels.

Alex Shomburg, Lou Fine, C.C. Beck, L.B. Cole, Jack Kirby and many more helped to establish the comic industry and developed characters that have lasted for more than a half a century. It's understandable why the early works of these comic book pioneers have become so sought after. Everyone knows that sales of Golden Age comics have sky rocketed, especially those that were drawn by the above mentioned gentlemen. But there are also great artists in other eras... and the fandom spotlight is again including the Silver Age of comics... along with the writers and the artistic geniuses who worked on them.

If I had to pick the one artist who defines the great talent that was available during the Silver Age of comics it would be Murphy Anderson. If you look at his work you can tell the care that went into each line that was drawn by him. Under the care of Murphy Anderson each character seemed to almost take on a life of its own, and no series defined this better than the Silver Age DC Comics title *Hawkman*.

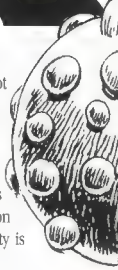
Hawkman made his first Silver Age appearance in *Brave And The Bold* #34 in 1961, but this version of the winged warrior was very different from his Golden Age counterpart. Whereas the Golden Age Hawkman was the reincarnation of an Egyptian Prince, this newer version was an alien police officer named Katar Hol who was from a world named Thanagar. Hol and his wife Shayera traveled to earth in pursuit of a criminal from their homeworld. Once on earth they assumed the identities of Hawkman and Hawkgirl, and combated crime wherever it lurked in the fictional metropolis known as Midway City. Prior to *Hawkman* #1 Katar Hol appeared in *Atom* #7, *Brave And The Bold* #34-36, 42-44, and 51, and *Mystery In Space* #87-90. Murphy Anderson first applied his able talents to the character in *Atom* #7 where he provided the inks, and in *Mystery In Space* #87-90 where he did the art. The greatness of Joe Kubert's re-introducion to the character will always be a key milestone in the history of the Silver Age. But it would be Murphy Anderson's version that would literally bring the total brillance of the Hawkman character to life!

With the debut of *Hawkman* #1 comic fans would encounter stories and art that would blend together science fiction and ancient history. Gardner Fox, who wrote the series, and Murphy Anderson, who provided the art, would always find a way to have Hawkman be connected to the ancient wonders of the world.

One method they used to keep Hawkman and Hawkgirl intertwined with ancient history was to make them curators (in their civilian identities) of the Midway City Museum. If you look at the covers of this series you will find that in almost every one Hawkman is brandishing some type of ancient weapon...whether it be a mace, crossbow, or shield. Surrounding these characters with ancient artifacts not only gave them a connection to the real world, but also gave them (subliminally) a connection to the origins of the Golden Age Hawkman.

Since the original Hawkman was supposed to be a reincarnated Egyptian prince, the "logic" of giving this newer version of the character some type of connection to ancient history as well as to comic book continuity is nothing short of brilliant.

The first nine issues of *Hawkman* are my favorites of the series as they set the tone for the title overall and allow the character to grow into a personality separate from his Golden Age forefather. Murphy Anderson's art and Gardner Fox' scripts on these issues not only helped to define the character of Hawkman for the reader, but also gave you a



Hawkman art courtesy the Al Czarnecki collection.

MAN

By James Cangialosi

feeling of... almost being there WITH the character. Anderson's ability to draw emotional facial expressions made us feel like the characters had a life all of their own. To illustrate, lets take a look at the early issues of the high flying Hawkman.

His Own Magazine!

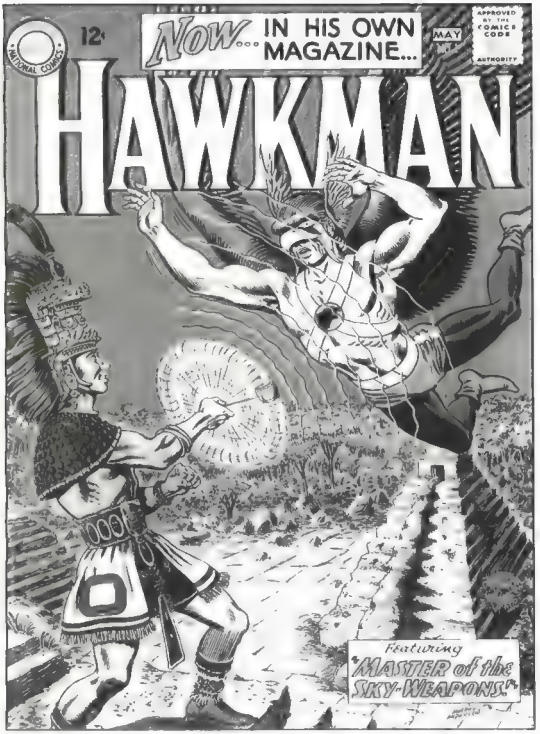
Hawkman #1 made its debut in 1961 and began a series that would give fans the thrill of soaring into adventures with Hawkman and his wife Hawkgirl. The cover to issue one had Hawkman battling a villain named Chac. The villain is seen twirling some type of weapon that emits vibrations strong enough to stop Hawkman in flight. Anderson's ability to capture the essence of the story on the cover alone makes you almost feel Hawkman's frustration at not being able to get his hands on the villain.

The first story in issue one was entitled "Rivalry of the Winged Warriors!". The premise has Hawkman and Hawkgirl back on their homeworld giving a detailed report to their superiors about their recent adventures on earth. They tell the tale of a recent case where they made a bet on whether Thanagarian Police Methods were better than Earth Police Methods in capturing criminals. Hawkgirl would use Thanagarian methods while Hawkman would use good old fashion earth knowhow. Even with the

HAWKMAN © 1986 DC. ART © 1987 MURPHY ANDERSON

use of such great gadgets as a Thermotector and the Lustometer, Hawkgirl was not able to beat Hawkman. In the end the winged warrior was able to show that even though earth was technologically inferior to his world it still had some positive things to offer.

The second story entitled "Master of the Sky-Weapons!" has the Hawks battling an ancient conqueror known as Chac. Chac gained his powers from weapons he stole from an alien spacecraft which had crashed on earth. In the end our heroes were able to beat the villain and temporarily restore peace and tranquillity.



After half a dozen Brave & Bold tryouts plus several crossovers, it was indeed cause for celebration when the Winged Wonder appeared "in his own magazine".

Secret Of The Sizzling Sparklers

The cover to *Hawkman* #2 features Hawkman preparing to do battle with a group of aliens streaming out of a spaceship The first story called "Secret of the Sizzling Sparklers!" has the Hawks battling aliens from a dimension known as Ilorth. These aliens were intergalactic slavers who traveled to earth in order to absorb the various energies which bombarded the planet. The absorbed energy empowers the aliens with a "super-sense" which they use to conquer other races. With the use of ancient earth weapons and Thanagarian science, Hawkman and Hawkgirl are able to defeat the aliens. and free the enslaved races. In "Wings Across Time!", the second story of the issue, Hawkman is involved in an adventure that circles around the discovery of the wings of Icarus.

Pharaoh's Fearsome Statue

In "The Fear that Haunted Hawkman!", the first story in *Hawkman* #3, we see our heroes come in contact with a Egyptian statue that has the ability to instill fear in anyone who gazes into its eyes. While battling a Pogo-Jet Bandit Hawkman accidentally looks into this statue's eyes and becomes terrified of the Bandit. Hawkman eventually deduces that the statue was used by a Pharaoh to keep his subjects under his control. This story is so detailed it explains that when light enters a small hole at the top of the statue it would be changed by the strange mineral that the statue was composed of into a beam that would produce fear in anyone who looked at it. Hawkman being the great superhero that he is decides to reverse the polarity of the metal thus causing anyone who looks into it's eyes to really like anyone they happen to be with.

Story number two in this issue is called "Birds in a Gilded Cage!", and puts Hawkman and Hawkgirl in contact with a super intelligent alien bird. This bird not only has the ability to think and reason, but it also has a power rod that can produce objects out of thin air.

Zatara & Zatanna

The cover to *Hawkman* #4 is Murphy Anderson's work at its best, and is reminiscent of Alfred Hitchcock's "Vertigo" in its depiction of Hawkman plummeting from a great height towards the ground. The cover may seem simple enough, but when you look at how each feather of his outstretched wings is meticulously drawn and how his facial expression perfectly portrays his struggle to overcome this dilemma. It's easy to see the great care that Anderson had for this character.

The first story of this issue is called "The Girl Who Split in Two!", and not only marks the first appearance of Zatanna but also the first Silver Age appearance of Zatara, The Magician. The story centers on both Hawkman and Hawkgirl separately discovering what at first seems to be two identical talking statues. They later learn that these statues are actually Zatara's daughter, Zatanna, who split herself in two in order to try and hasten her search for her missing father. The Hawks are eventually able to merge the two Zatannas together again, allowing her to continue on her quest for her father.

The second story entitled "The Machine that Magnetized Men!" sends the Hawks into battle against a group of time

traveling crooks from the year 11964. These crooks travel back with an armored vehicle that has the ability to control the magnetic field of the Earth and use the mechanism to assist them in stealing ancient artifacts. By spraying themselves with a chemical developed from a fiber lost from one of the crook's uniforms the Hawks counter the effects of the vehicle.

Hawkgirl's statement on the last panel of page 11 of this story is one of the more serious moments of the series. After placing the crooks in police custody she says "Those criminals will remain here the rest of their lives—meaning they are going to die—before they were born!" The message trying to be instilled was clear. No matter what time you are from crime doesn't pay!

Shadow-Thief!

The cover to issue #5, which features Hawkman battling the Shadow Thief, is arguably one of the best ever produced by Murphy Anderson for this series. The cover gives portrayals of Hawkman and the Shadow-Thief which has never been recaptured by any other artist. Anderson is somehow able to make the villain seem like a real shadow, and in a seemingly simple cover captures the true villainy of the dark villain.

Some may be asking, "How tough can it be to draw a shadow?"

I don't think many artists would find it difficult to draw a shadow. The real challenge is to make the shadow appear to be moving and lifelike... something only a very talented artist can do. The canary yellow background of this cover makes the Shadow-Thief stand out even more and appear truly menacing.

Issue #5 marks the first book length story of the title, and is entitled "Steal, Shadow–Steal". In it, Hawkman and Hawkgirl battle their nemesis the Shadow-Thief. During the course of the story, the Shadow-Thief traps the shadows of Hawkman and Hawkgirl in the shadow world known as Xarapion. Only with the help of a benevolent alien (whom they meet in the shadow dimension) are the Hawks able to return to earth and defeat the shadowy criminal.

Part Gorilla, Part Bird

Hawkman battles a creature called a "Wingor" on the cover of *Hawkman* #6. The physical complexity of this creature, which is part gorilla and part bird. Murphy Anderson crafts what many feel is the most striking cover of the run... a cover that captures the duality of the character and makes it appear a formidable opponent to our hero.

The full length story of issue #6 is entitled "World Where Evolution Went Wild!", and has our winged heroes travel to an alien world named Illoral. On this world they come in contact with creatures that have been merged together as a result of an accident involving a scientist's genetic invention. The Wingors (which fans meet on the cover of this issue) were actually the people of the planet who were accidentally transformed into these creatures by the invention. Hawkman and Hawkgirl combine their scientific know-how to help the inhabitants return to normal.

Crocodile-Men!

The two stories which make up *Hawkman* #7 pit our heroes against both an old adversary and a new enemy in the Hawks fight for justice. In "Amazing Return of the I.Q. Gang" Hawkman and Hawkgirl run across their old enemy Ira "I.Q." Quimby, and in "Attack of the Crocodile-Men", the heroes meet a criminal organization known as CAW. This group is composed of crooks who are out to steal the greatest treasures of the world. They tend to remind me of Specter, the criminal organization in the James Bond movies. In case you don't have a copy of this issue, CAW stands for Criminal Alliance of the World.

In "Giant in the Golden Mask", which is the first story in *Hawkman* #8, a friend of Carter Hall is taken control of by an ancient golden mask. The mask seems to have an intelligence all of its own, and uses its powers to search out its massive missing body. Once the mask is placed on the large body it comes to life, and becomes an indestructible behemoth with almost limitless powers. Only by removing the golden mask from the body and placing it in a container are the Hawks able to stop the monster from wreaking havoc. The second story of this issue is entitled "Battle of the Bird Man Bandits", and has Hawkman and Hawkgirl battling alien bird-like creatures.

HAWKMAN #9 (Aug/Sep) "Master Trap Of The Matter Master", written by Gardner Fox and rendered by Murphy Anderson, combines mystery, sci-fi, and a special guest appearance by the Atom!

HAWKMAN #4 (Oct/Nov 1964) Hawkman takes the plunge in this dizzying and detailed scene form "The Machine that Magnetized Men".

HAWKMAN © 1985 DC

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SILVER AGE HAWKMAN STORIES

Hawkman #1
(Apr/May 1964)
(A) "Rivalry of the Winged Warriors"
(B) "Master of the Sky-Weapons"

Hawkman #2
(Jun/Jul 1964)
(A) "Secret of the Sizzling Sparklers"
(B) "Wings Across Time"

Hawkman #3
(Aug/Sep 1964)
(A) "The Fear that Haunted Hawkman"
(B) "Birds in a Gilded Cage"

Hawkman #4
(Oct/Nov 1964)
(A) "The Girl Who Split in Two"
(B) "The Machine that Magnetized Men"

Hawkman #5
(Dec 1964/Jan 1965)
"Steal, Shadow — Steal"

Hawkman #6
(Feb/Mar1965)
"World Where Evolution Went Wild"

Hawkman #7
(Apr/May 1965)
(A) "Amazing Return of the I.Q. Gang" (B) "Attack of the Crocodile-Men"

Hawkman #8
(Jun/Jul 1965)
(A) "Giant in the Golden Mask" (B) "Battle of the Bird-Man Bandits"

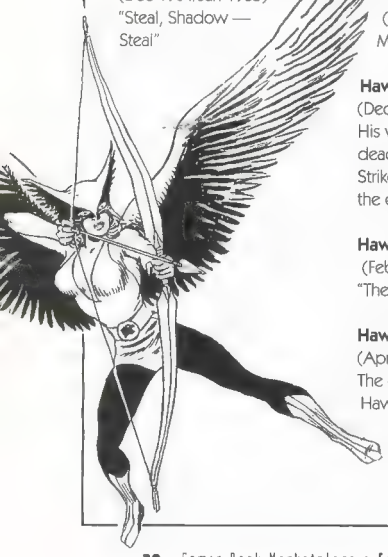
Hawkman #9
(Aug/Sep 1965)
"Master trap of the Matter Master"

Hawkman #10
(Oct/Nov 1965)
(A) Way out weapons! Explosive excitement! as "Hawkman Clips the Claws of Caw"
(B) "The Magic Mirror Mystery"

Hawkman #11
(Dec 1965/Jan 1966)
His wonder wings were deadly weapons! "The Shrike Strikes at Night" Introducing the electrifying Shrike!

Hawkman #12
(Feb/Mar 1966)
"The Million Year Long War"

Hawkman #13
(Apr/May 1966)
The colossal combat that Hawkman had to lose—to save his life! "Quest of the Immortal Queen"



NINE HAS IT ALL!

The book that exemplifies all that the series has to offer fans of the character is *Hawkman* #9. This issue has it all. A classic Murphy Anderson cover, a guest appearance by the Atom, and a great blend of intrigue and science fiction. The cover, which depicts Hawkman and Hawkgirl being sealed in a diamond prison by Matter Master, is made even more dynamic by the deep purple background and Anderson's amazing composition and fine line. The detail given to the diamond prison gives fans the impression that the Hawks may have finally met their match.

The full length story in this issue is called "Master Trap of the Matter Master", and is one of the best ever written for the series. The story takes off when Hawkman and Hawkgirl are trapped by the Matter Master in a diamond prison. Once encased in the trap, the Hawks begin to shrink right before Matter Master's eyes. The villain is visually shaken by what takes place, and is left dumbfounded. He has no clue as to what is happening to the heroes.

The duo eventually shrink so much that they are propelled into a sub-atomic universe. Hawkman later deduces that the reason they were shrunk was that during a recent battle between the, Matter Master and the Justice League of America the villains Mentachem rod came in contact with the white dwarf matter in the Atom's costume. This matter is what gives the Atom his size control powers, and the rod had absorbed some of its properties.

Because Hawkman and Hawkgirl are trapped in the prison created from the Mentachem they are affected by the absorbed energies. The Hawks eventually escape the sub-atomic world, capture the Matter Master, and return to normal size with the help of the Atom. What makes this story even more enjoyable is that the Atom and Hawkman learn each others alter egos at the end of the story, which helps to solidify one of the most enduring comic book teams of the DC Silver Age.

While Hawkman was not a long lasting title, it was an extremely enjoyable one. It gave fans of the Winged Wonder a chance to soar right along with the great character... in a facinating and exciting sci-fi universe. Hawkman fans who have not had the opportunity to read the issues from this series will find them a satisfying and enjoyable purchase.

What I gave you is only a brief synopsis of some of the adventures that you can find in these stories... but don't just take my word for it. If there is anything that I have learned about this hobby, it's that you have to read the comics to really enjoy them and to gain a deep appreciation for the work that went into producing them.

Gardner Fox and Murphy Anderson created a Silver masterpiece in the Hawkman series... and they will live forever in the hearts of both those who read them for the first time in the '90s... and those who were lucky enough to read them bright, white, and shiny right from the newsstand! ■

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The Pedigree Puzzle

Pretty much from the beginning, I was fascinated for Golden and Silver Age comics, while my friends bought and read the latest from Marvel and DC. I would tirelessly scan the walls of my local shop every week, admiring the owner's early *Fantastic Fours* and *Spider-Mans*, hoping that one day I would possess those seemingly untouchable treasures. My best friend couldn't comprehend my spending $25 on a Strange Tales #101... and it was beat up, to boot!

I studied my *Overstreet Price Guide* tirelessly, hungry for more knowledge in a vast universe whose doors had just opened up to me. Things that wouldn't normally interest a kid, such as how many copies of *Action* #1 existed in high grade, interested me.

Inevitably I stumbled across my first taste of what a pedigree was in the twelfth edition of the *Price Guide*. That year a brief history on Mile Highs was included in the annual market report. In a trance I read the paragraph "...every Golden Age key present... snow white pages....". My mind reeled, picturing mounds and mounds of Near Mint *Action* and *Captain America*, and *Whiz* as far as the eye could see! It was a collector's dream come true!

As time passed and my sources of information broadened, I hungered for more knowledge about this already legendary "Mile High" collection. How was it bought? How many books did it include? Who owns them now?

Slowly, bits and pieces of information came together. I obtained the original list of comics; I talked with people who knew the present owners of much of the material; I read articles which researched the collection in depth. Finally, I felt I knew the whole story, and I felt like I had a working knowledge of what must be the only "special" collection of books.

Then someone told me about the Lamont Larson collection. Intrigued again, I delved into that "pedigree" as well, learning all I could about it. Then came the San Francisco collection... then the Denver collection... then the Cosmic Aeroplane collection... the Allentown... the Pennsylvania... the Recil Macon... Chicago... White Mountain... Hawkeye... WHEW!!!

Everywhere I turned there suddenly was a name attached to every comic book! Talk about confusing! And yet, I couldn't help being utterly fascinated by it all. Slowly, I dissected each pedigree, learning about its origin and what each collection contained.

This task proved to be much more difficult than I had anticipated, because it turned out that information about many of the different pedigreed collections was hard to get. I realized that, other than the Mile High collection, very little had been written about these "Pedigree Puzzles."

In order to track down the origin of some of them I went directly to the purchaser himself... other stories have been handed down from collector to collector, and are now part of the hobby mythos! During the compiling of the information, I realized it might be of interest to other collectors and hobbyists... so what follows is a look at 16 of the more well-known and popular pedigree collections in the marketplace... plus my take on how the market views their desirability and how most seasoned collectors go about identifying them.

So... starting with what the vast majority of collectors consider the largest and most famous pedigreed collection of them all...

The Edgar Church – Mile High Collection

In 1977 a young dealer named Chuck Rosanski received a phone call from a man asking if he bought old comics. He had a large accumulation his father-in-law saved and wanted to sell it. Rosanski's store was not the seller's first attempt to sell the collection, but unlike the previous dealers Rosanski agreed to travel the long distance and check it out.

Upon arriving at the small house, Chuck was led to a closet where some old pulps were stored. Unfortunately water had leaked from the ceiling and soaked the pulps. Not discouraged, the man asked Rosanski if he would like to see the comics for sale. He was then led down into the cellar, where a small pantry stored the comics for sale. Upon opening the pantry doors Chuck was astounded by the sight of mounds of comics everywhere, stacked eight feet high in the middle and carefully piled on the surrounding shelves. Examining the comics closer, he realized the collection consisted of full runs of Golden Age comics-and the condition of the books was incredible, better than he had ever seen!

Trying to hide his excitement Chuck accepted the man's asking price, $2,000 for roughly 22,000 comics (about 9¢ a comic) and left, determined to raise the funds immediately. A phone call was placed to Burrell Rowe, owner of Houston's Camelot and one of the biggest dealers in the nation at that time. Rowe granted Chuck the $2,000 to buy the collection, but stipulated that in return he was to receive $10,000 in comics (priced at *Guide*) from the collection.

understanding the complex history of collection provenance!

by Matt Nelson

Once the deal was consummated, Rosanski filled his van to the teeth and traveled back to his house, his mind spinning.

After storing the collection in various cedar boxes in his basement Chuck called Burrell in to choose his comics. Flabbergasted by the sight of the books, Burrell proceeded to pick practically all of the Fiction House, EC, Fox, *Detective* #28-40, *Special Edition* #1, *Captain Marvel Jr.* #1, *Stuntman* #1, a few pre-hero DC, and other miscellaneous comics.

Soon after, Bruce Hamilton was alerted to Chuck's find, and purchased $10,000 of mainly DC from the collection. Bruce then called Gary Carter about the collection, and, for the first and possibly only time in his life, Bruce was almost speechless. Carter (along with his Father Nick, and Brother Lane) purchased Hamilton's material, then scheduled a trip to Denver for more. Once there, he and brother Lane obtained another sizable chunk of the DC s, including most of the pre-hero material, as well as much of the DC esoteric titles.

Following the Carter visit, Rosanski released a catalog of the collection to the public. In addition to the comics bought by Rowe, Hamilton, Carter, and a few others, Rosanski did not list *Action* #1-10, *Marvel Mystery* #1-10, or *Daring Mystery* #1-8, or *Superman* #14. He held these back as personal favorites, but would later sell them privately. For the books in the catalog Rosanski used the following grades: NM+ (Near Mint Plus) , NM (Near Mint), F (Fine), VG (Very Good), G (Good), and, yes, an occasional Fair. He graded fairly strict, dropping a book to Fine if there was a small defect. Otherwise, all books from Very Fine to Mint by today's standards were rated either a NM or NM+. He priced the collection using the 1977 *Overstreet Price Guide* and his multiple of *guide* varied, depending on the title.

High demand titles, such as *Marvel Mystery* and *Action,* were 2x *Guide* in NM and 2.5x *guide* in NM+. Regular titles, such as *Captain Marvel*, were 1.5x *Guide* in NM and 2x *guide* in NM+. The lower demand titles, such as *Big Shot*, were priced almost at *guide*, even in NM+. A few books were priced quite high for the time, such as *Sensation* #1 (3.33x *guide*) and *Mask* #1 (3.33x *Guide*).

Back then, multiples of *Guide* was a totally new concept, so when Rosanski's catalog came out many in fandom did not respond well. As a result the collection sold very slowly; years later full runs were still unbroken and available for sale. The Mile High collection was one of the best kept secrets in the hobby for an amazingly long time.

But once the public realized the sheer magnitude of the Mile High collection, all remaining comics were snatched up, some never to be seen again. Since then, movement of large accumulations at one time have been rare, with only a few loose books here and there popping up in the market from time to time. Currently a handful of collectors control significant portions of the collection: most of the early DC runs and keys belong to one collector on the east coast. Another collector from Chicago owns the Fawcetts. A dealer out of California has practically all of the Timely, as well as a large portion of miscellaneous titles. A dealer on the east coast also holds a large portion of miscellaneous Mile Highs, rumored to be as much as one-fourth of the collection.

Movement of the prime Mile High material since the early 1980s has been minimal. Three periods are of significance, the first being in 1984 when Sparkle City offered a large number of DC Mile Highs for sale. The second was in the late 1980s when Ernie Gerber began selling his Mile Highs that were accumulated during his creation of the *Photo-Journal*. The third was in 1994 and 1995, during which many of the prime DC keys, such as *Detective* #27 and *Whiz* #2 (#1), changed hands at many multiples of *Guide*.

The history behind the amassing of this famous collection began in 1937 when a thriving commercial artist named Edgar Church decided to hone his skills at drawing the human figure. Traveling to a nearby newsstand he purchased nearly every comic, a ritual that would be practiced for the next fifteen years. Church also wanted back issues of the comics he had missed, so he bought many of his mid-1930 s comics from a second-hand store called "The Reader's Guild" where his used comics cost him only eight or nine cents each. These "second hand" books that Church purchased are described by some as the "double slash" Mile Highs because of two pencil "slash marks" in the upper left-hand corner through the price, usually followed by a discount price of six to nine cents. The *Detective* #27 was bought second hand, which explains why it is (understandably) not the highest grade copy in existence.

Each month Church bought every comic on the stands and brought them home, carefully stacking them in his cellar inside the pantry. This went on until 1953, when the buying became less frequent. The last authentic copies were dated 1960, around when Church stopped buying periodicals altogether. They were left in the pantry for twenty more years until Church was placed in a home, and the decision was made to sell his accumulation.

In addition to the comics Rosanski pur-

chased there were some samples of Church's original art. As an interesting aside, the front of Rosanski's catalog of the Mile High collection features one of Church's art pieces.

Volumes of information and stories could be written on the Mile High collection. Luckily good documentation has been kept over the years, and as a result there are relatively few unknowns left to discover about the most famous pedigree in fandom.

Mile High Identification

Because the Mile High collection is so famous, and because there has been minimal separation of many of the titles, tracking, identification, and authentication is usually not a problem. On the other hand, because of the enormous size of the collection many of the books have become lost, and authentication is not foolproof in every case, as I will discuss.

The first method of identification involves the codes penciled on the majority of Mile High covers, mostly during the 1940-1945 period. Although there are codes on many books after 1945 and a few prior to 1939, it is mainly regarded that authentication of Mile Highs from these two periods relies on methods other than code identification. If space had allowed, I would have discussed in detail the different types and styles of coding present on Mile High comics. Instead, I highly recommend Pat Kochanek's series of articles on the Mile High collection in *CBM* #2-5, which cover the coding in great detail.

In summary, there are three different letters present in a Mile High code: "C", "D", and "M". D is the most frequently represented letter on Mile Highs, particularly on DC, Timely, Fawcett, Quality, Fox, and Centaur comics. The letter C is present on mainly Fiction House, Nedor, and Dell. M is present on mid-1950's comics. Many have postulated that these letters represent the different distributors that supplied books.

In addition to these letters two numbers usually follow representing the month and day that particular comic book hit the newsstand. These numbers are sometimes absent, most commonly on pre-1940 or post-1945 comics. The code is usually written in the top left corner of the cover, sometimes above the logo, or in the logo itself. In the top right corner there is usually a number written, which represents the number of copies of that particular book on that particular newsstand. This number can show when the peak of superhero comics occurred, around 1943.

Coding of pre-1940 and post-1945 Mile Highs is sporadic at best, with writing styles varying from a more cursive D (with no month and date, late 1930's) to an actual stamp taking the place of handwritten codes (early 1950's).

Identifying these two periods of the Mile High collection require methods other than the coding prevalent in the 1940-1945 period. Other common methods include: comparing the comic in question with Rosanski's original list; checking for characteristic dust shadows on front and back covers; relying on the previous owners of the book in question; or have one of many Mile High experts check the comic, during which they will probably smell the pages, a method which is almost impossible for the average person, but common practice for an experienced collector in identifying a Mile High.

Despite all of these methods of identification some Mile Highs still cannot be 100% authenticated, and their questionable status usually causes a hesitancy with potential buyers. If you are uncertain about the authenticity of a particular book, I strongly suggest refraining from describing it as a Mile High. If you are mistaken you could cheat yourself or others. I feel it is always best to be sure, and if in doubt, check with an expert.

Mile High Value

The one famous aspect of the Mile High collection is its overall quality. Structurally, Mile Highs are beautiful NM to MT copies, but what sets a Mile High apart from everything else are its aesthetic qualities. From a standpoint of page quality, ink reflectivity (cover gloss), colors, and suppleness... the majority of Mile Highs are unsurpassed. It's amazing that in the nearly twenty years since the Mile High collection was discovered, no other collection has surfaced that collectors feel is comparable.

Let's look closer at what makes the Mile High collection so famous.

1) Structure - When Edgar Church bought his comics every week from the newsstand and it is rumored he bought only the "best" copies. Whether or not this is true, the vast majority of Mile Highs are structurally in the VF-NM range. The most common defects found on Mile Highs are diagonal "bindery tears" caused during the binding/trimming process (see the glossary in the *Overstreet/Carter Grading Guide*). This defect is usually present on the earlier books due to their size. Also, small stress marks on the spine are fairly common, probably from moving and sorting the collection early on.

The best examples of Mile High comics are in the middle of the collection, from 1940 to 1945. Many of the comics prior to 1937 were bought second-hand by Church and usually exhibit wear. Many Centaurs and some early pre-hero DC's fall into this category. Comics after 1945, and more so after 1950, exhibit wear as well, possibly due to the fact that Church's collecting years were nearing the end... and these books were on the top of stacks, prone to damage and lacking the necessary compression to keep out oxygen. Staples of Mile Highs are commonly perfectly "silver" with no signs of discoloration whatsoever.

2) Page Quality - Page quality of Mile Highs is unsurpassed, not only from the whiteness of pages, but also from a suppleness standpoint as well. In a book-by-book comparison with other pedigrees (even in cases where page whiteness is equal) the Mile High pages seem to have a lighter ("bouncier"), more supple and fresher texture. They literally feel like brand new books right off the newsstand. This quality is not only rare for 50 year old books, it's very impressive, especially when viewing a full run of Mile Highs all at once.

Experts have suggested that this extremely high page quality is a result of three factors present in their original storage environment: low temperature, low humidity, and considerable absence of oxygen

The first two factors are related to the climate of Denver, and the fact that the collection was stored in a basement (moderating temperature). The third factor is from the significant compression of books on the bottom of the eight-foot stacks. "pressing out" Oxygen. Coincidentally, these books are often the oldest, and thus, they exhibit the whitest pages of any in the whole collection.

There is a characteristic smell associated with Mile Highs as well. At one time, it was mistaken to be a cedar smell due to the cedar pantry in which the comics were stored. The smell actually represents the freshness of the pages, having aged very little. One collector associated the smell with a slight hint of baby

powder. The smell is one of many factors used by experts when identifying a Mile High comic.

Not many people can identify MH books this way because mastering the skill requires thousands of "educated sniffs", a training experience few will ever get. The one loophole to this identification method occurs when storage conditions change for a Mile High.

Once the collection was broken up in the late 1970s, the comics began a new aging process under different owners who used various storage methods. No doubt, if the collection were pieced back together today, many of the books would not resemble one another as they once did.

3) Mile High Gloss & Color - Just like their page quality, the gloss and colors of a Mile High cover are like new. Because of compression from the eight-foot stacks and almost no exposure to light, Mile Highs usually exhibit perfect cover gloss and the deepest, richest cover colors possible.

These aspects are what set a Mile High apart from a normal NM book. The superior quality of a Mile High's colors became apparent once they were compared to other books of the same period. On some books, people realized that the orange colors on their comics covers were actually red! This was true of a few other colors prone to fading.

As mentioned previously, some of the books at the beginning and end of the Mile High collection lack the same superior quality as much of the 1938-1945 period.

The comics from 1935 mid 1937 exhibit more wear because most were second-hand copies… yet still have the whitest pages from significant compression. On the other hand, some of the later Mile Highs are structurally perfect, but because of their position on tops of the stacks, lack of compression, the page quality and suppleness is not as impressive as earlier copies.

Mile Highs bring the highest multiple of all of the pedigrees, usually starting at 3x *Guide* for average titles, 5x *Guide* for the more popular comics (such as DC and Timely), and bringing as much as 12-15 x *Guide* for certain inexpensive, esoteric, and key books. Another factor contributes to multiples of *Guide* prices, depending. These high multiples are often due to the fact that the Mile High copy is often the best existing copy of a particular book. With this in mind, the high multiple paid for Mile Highs can be easily understood.

The Tom Reilly — San Francisco Collection

The San Francisco collection walked into Berkeley Con '73, the first underground comic convention Easter Weekend, 1973. The show was held at the University Of California, Berkeley Campus that weekend. Sunday afternoon, toward the end of the show, an elderly couple walked into the front area with a large palette of comics. Nick Marcus and Mike Manyak, two dealers participating in the show, spotted the comics first. As they went through the boxes, Manyak and Marcus couldn't believe their eyes. In the boxes were deep runs of DC, Quality, Timely, and others in stunning grade. Because Manyak and Marcus were Timely purists, they pulled out every Timely and purchased them: *Sub-Mariner* #1-13, *Human Torch* #1, 2, 4-9, 11-15, *Captain America* #1, 18, 19, 21-24, *Mystic* #5, 6, and *Young Allies* #1-5. Strangely, no *Marvel Mysterys* were present in the boxes.

Shortly thereafter, the dealers room was alerted of this cache, and Robert Beerbohm, Dave Belmont, and Robert Selvig approached the couple. After pulling them into a side room and pouring over the full runs of early superhero Golden Age in Near Mint condition, the three dealers proceeded to feverishly bid on the collection. Apparently overwhelmed by the fervor, the couple left with the books, but did leave their phone number and address. Soon after, the dealers traveled to the couple's home and gave them a 1972 *Price Guide* to value their books. After a couple of days the couple called Comics and Comix, a shop in Berkeley (owned by Beerbohm, Bud Plant, and John Barrett) and informed the dealers they were willing to part with their accumulation for 40% of the 1972 *Guide*. The deal was consummated and the collection was divided between Beerbohm, Selvig, and Belmont. The collection contained many keys, as well as deep runs (including *Marvel Mysterys*, which were mistakenly given to the neighbor's kids), but many large gaps existed; Beerbohm felt there was more to come.

Sure enough, a second call came about two weeks later. Apparently, the younger sister of the elderly couple had another accumulation of Golden Age comics. A deal was made, this time for 60% of *Guide,* and purchased by Beerbohm.

The second batch filled in many gaps from the first, but still more gaps existed. Inevitably, a third call was received from a woman on the east coast who had the final batch. By this time the 1973 *Guide* had come out; 60% of it was paid for the third accumulation. Finally, the collection was complete.

The original owner's name was Tom Reilly. As the story goes, Reilly began reading comics in the summer of 1939, and by 1940 was faithfully buying every major company on the newsstands. Because of this, runs from 1940 and on were virtually complete. In 1942 Reilly was drafted into the service and asked his parents to buy comics for him while he was away. In order to achieve this, the owner of a local store stamped all of Reilly's books on the back cover with a rubber stamp, ready for Mr. or Mrs. Reilly to pick up when necessary. Tragically, Tom Reilly was killed toward the end of the war during a Kamikaze attack. As a result, all titles in the collection ceased once his parents found out about his death, sometime in 1945. Stricken with grief, Reilly's parents sealed up his room and left it untouched for the next thirty years. The collection was saved in this room until his father died in December 1972, at which time the comics were split up among relatives.

Robert Beerbohm was responsible for most of the initial sales of the San Francisco collection. They were all sold within a year of the original purchase. No large chunks were purchased directly by any collector, and as a result, San Francisco books are spread out everywhere.

On an interesting note, the name "San Francisco" is misleading. At no time were the books of this pedigreed collection in San Francisco. One source feels the proper name should be the "Tom Reilly" collection, named after the original owner.

San Francisco Identification

There are two ways to identify a San Francisco book: 1)the rubber stamp of the name "Tom Reilly" or 2) the penciled arrival date. Unfortunately, many of the books were not stamped until 1942 when Reilly left for war. Many of the keys lack the stamp and are sitting unknown in collections. Those that do have the stamp exhibit it on the back cover, usually in the lower left corner. The other method to identify a San Francisco book is by the consistent arrival date present on the front (*continued on page 59*)

Prototype or Retread

By Jon Berk

Click. The last issue of CBM spotlighted the run of *Suspense Comics*, and particularly the third issue with the classic Schomburg cover. Other than the postage size reproduction in the *Gerber Photo-Journal* and occasionally viewing the book from afar at infrequently attended comicbook conventions, I had never had an opportunity to view the third issue with any degree of care until it was reproduced in the color gallery of *CBM* 30. After looking at it a bit, it seemed oddly familiar, as if I had seen it in some other form.

Click. I pulled out a copy of *All-New Comics* #8. There it was. Another Schomburg cover. As viewed, there was a bound blond threatened by an upturned sword. Both issues have the woman surrounded by monstrous Nazis, some hooded in Klu Klux Klan fashion. Both impending execu tions are set in a tropical locale surrounded by raised walls or land with desperate rescues in sight. In one, a Nazi shoots a revolver from the lower right to the upper left while in the other the shot starts from the lower left and goes to the upper right. Instead of the spear set to be flung from up above in *Suspense* #3, there is a machine gun firing down into the scene of impending mayhem. Of course, the *All-New* cover prominently features the "Red Blazer" and the "Boy Heroes", the title's resident heroes. However, the overall composition and feel of each cover are obviously similar. Mere coincidence?

Click. *Suspense* #3 has an April 1944 cover date while *All-New* #8 has a cover date of May 1944- only one month apart! Logic would dictate that Schomburg had to have created these covers in close temporal proximity to one another. Commencing with issue #6, *All-New*'s prior spo-radic output went on an every other month schedule. One could hypothesize that the owner of the title would want to insure a regular schedule by having several issues already prepared. The first Schomburg cover was with the seventh issue. Could Schomburg have created the cover for issue 8 well in advance of its scheduled release? Is it possible that the cover to #8 was the prototype/inspiration for one of the classic comicbook covers of all time? Is it possible that the cover to issue #8 was created before *Suspense* #3?

Click. *All-New Comics* contained a text feature that was entitled "The Story Behind the Cover". The text would then relate a short story. The cover to a particular issue illustrated a dramatic moment from that story. Obviously the text piece and cover in issue #8 involved the comic characters of that title. Succinctly, the story in *All-New* #8 involved the abduction and planned execution by Nazis of the daughter of the French commander in North Africa. However, these plot elements apply with equal force to the cover of *Suspense* #3 as demonstrated by the following abbreviated excerpt from *All-New* #8:

> *Marianna Le Clair was of that startling beauty which made all stop to stare...Yes, she was a famous general's daughter. The General was...[the French] commander of Camel Corps..[in] North Africa. [As she strolled through a bazaar] ...on a hot sultry day...a dirty rough hand..went across her mouth...a sharp blow struck her temple....and she lost all consciousness.... A shrill woman's cry stabbed the sultry air of the oasis...[T]russed by heavy rope, lying limp and helpless was pretty*

COLOR GALLERY

Marianna....Over her hovered devilishly fantastic creatures,garbed in weird costumes. To a side, a fiendish-face Nazi..squatted. In the center of the piazza a man stood raising a wicked short sword....

The cover to *Suspense* #3 had no relationship to the content of that comicbook. It may be stated that while this cover represents the ultimate "refinement" of the cover/concept of *All-New* #8, it is, nonetheless, a refinement. Clearly, the text piece of *All-New* #8 easily reflects the scene depicted on *Suspense* #3. Is the cover to *All-New* #8 the prototype for the cover to *Suspense* #3? Is the text piece of *All-New* #8 the inspiration for the cover of *Suspense* #3? You be the judge.

Click. ■

Jon Berk is an attorney from Hartford, Connecticut and has been collecting comic books for over twenty years. His nationally renowned collection includes complete Silver Age Marvel runs, extensive Silver Age DC material, and one of the most complete pre-hero Golden Age collections in existence.

ALL NEW © HARVEY ALL AMERICAN AND WORLD'S FINEST © DC SUSPENSE © CONTINENTAL

MURPHY ANDERSON'S HAWKMAN

In *Hawkman* #12 (Feb/Mar 1966, right) Katar Hol battles super-science and a fantastic creature's advanced logic.

Murphy Anderson singles out the cover to *Hawkman* #6 (Feb/Mar 1965, below) as his all-time favorite.

HAWKMAN © 1995 DC

HAWKMAN
12¢
MAR
NO 6
GOT TO BRING MY MACE UP— BEFORE THAT MASSIVE FIST COMES CRASHING DOWN!
THRILL TO THE MOST AMAZING BATTLES EVER FOUGHT—ON "the WORLD WHERE EVOLUTION RAN WILD!"

The extraordinary cover of *Hawkman* #1 (Apr/May 1964, above) made an auspicious start for the title.

Hawkman #8 (Jun/Jul 1965, left) illustrates DC's time-honored philosophy: when in doubt, unleash a giant!

HIGH-FLYING THRILLS AND ACTION!
HAWKMAN
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
SEPT
NO. 9
12¢
LIQUID DIAMOND ENGULFING US--SOLIDIFYING AROUND OUR BODIES!
A LOT O' GOOD THAT'S GONNA DO YOU, HAWKMAN! YOU'LL NEVER ESCAPE MY DIAMOND TRAP!
EXTRA! SPECIAL GUEST APPEARANCE BY The ATOM
The WINGED WONDERS IN THE FIGHT-OF-A-LIFETIME AGAINST A VILLAIN WHO MOBILIZES RAW ELEMENTS OF NATURE!
"MASTER TRAP of the MATTER MASTER!"

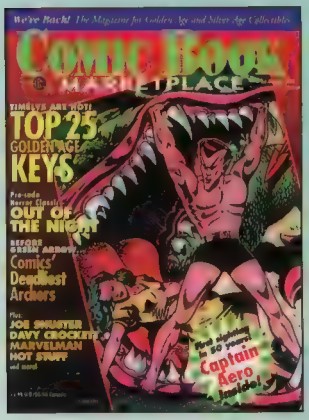
The Winged Wonder's arrow has little effect on his fleshless foe on the cover of *Hawkman* #5 (Dec 1964/Jan 1965, left).

Anderson's dynamic *Hawkman* #7 cover (Apr/May 1965, below) features a classic slugfest as Hawkman takes on a trio of Crocodile-Men!

The Hawks fight to escape the doom of liquid diamond on the cover of *Hawkman* #9 (Aug/Sep 1965, above).

The novel length battle between the electrifying Shrike and the man from Thanagar (*Hawkman* #11, Dec 1965/Jan 1966, right) is Silver Age DC at its best!

OWN A PIECE

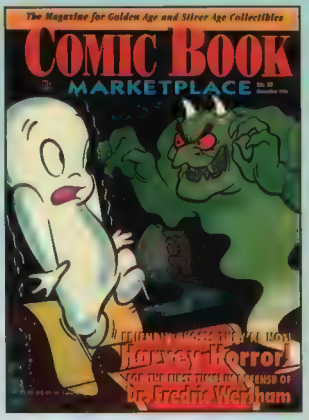


CBM #22 1st Gemstone Issue, Timely Survey, 100 Pagers, Joe Shuster!

CBM #23 Virgil Finlay, More Timely, W. Marston, Wild Archies, SA Flash!

CBM #24 SA Spider-Man, Romita Sr., Animated Star Trek, Black Terror!

CBM #28 Steranko Special Issue, the Shadow, Love Comics Glut, more!

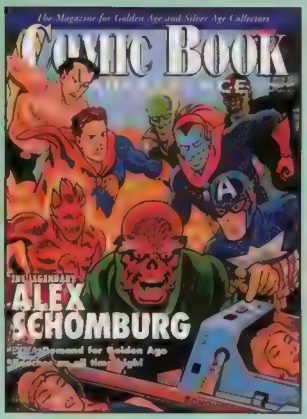


CBM #29 Harvey Horror, Horrors of War, Halloween Comics, and more!

CBM #30 L.B. Cole, Suspense Comics, Archie's Fly, Charlton!

OF HISTORY

CBM #25 Phantom Lady, Worlds of Fear, Fave Cover Survey, and more!



CBM #26 Schomburg, Jitlov, Blue Streak, Superman on Radio, Ditko!

CBM #27 Witness, Vin Sullivan, Jr. Woodchucks, Capt. Marvel Jr., more!

CBM #31 Tuska, Lex Luthor, Hitler Comics, Yellow Claw, One-Shots!

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P. O. Box 180900 • Coronado • California • 92178

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Call (619) 437-1996
California residents please add 7% sales tax.

Strange Adventures #160 (Jan 1964, right) contains the last installment of the Atomic Knights saga… one of the monuments of the DC Silver Age.

One of the most memorable classics of the Silver Age, *Strange Adventures* #124 (Jan 1961, below) features "The Face-Hunter From Saturn!"… the first issue of the faceless creature trilogy.

STRANGE ADVENTURES
12¢
UNLESS WE FIND A WAY TO DESTROY THESE GIGANTIC ALIEN PLANTS, THEY'LL DRINK UP ALL THE WATER ON EARTH!
Featuring The SPACE-ROOTS of EVIL

STRANGE ADVENTURES
10¢
NO 134
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
Featuring "The FACE-HUNTER from SATURN!"
SHOCK RAYS FROM THAT FACELESS CREATURE-- PREVENTING US FROM FIRING OUR GUNS!

Every month a new alien invasion threatened our planet… reflecting some of the paranoia of the times and captivating young readers. *Strange Adventures* #139 (Apr 1962, above), featuring "The Space-Roots Of Evil" was no exception.

Science was unable to solve the problem of "Earth's Frozen Heat Wave!" (#161, Feb 1964, below) as the magic era of DC dominance at the newsstand was coming to a close.

STRANGE ADVENTURES
IN THE MIDST OF A RECORD-BREAKING HEAT WAVE ALL WATER ON EARTH HAS SUDDENLY FROZEN! UNLESS SCIENCE SOLVES THE PROBLEM OF HOW TO GIVE US DRINKING WATER SOON, LIFE ON OUR WORLD IS DOOMED!
Featuring EARTH'S FROZEN HEAT WAVE

Strange Adventures #141 (Jun 1962, left) shows a New Yorker's nightmare on the cover, has a great Atomic Knights story, and contains the classic "Gran'pa Fights A Space-War", drawn by the great Sid Greene.

Murphy Anderson's favorite *Strange Adventures* cover (#144, Sep 1962, below) is also the only issue to feature the Atomic Knights on the cover.

STRANGE ADVENTURES © 1995 DC

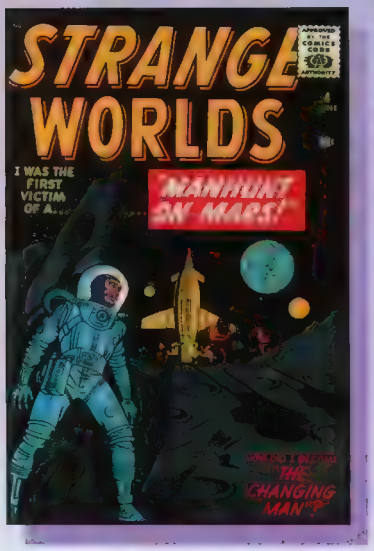
The cover of *Strange Adventures* #157 (Oct 1963, above) is one of the great alien classics that kid-readers all over the country were wild about. The "alien of the month" this time are butterfly wing-eared ETs.

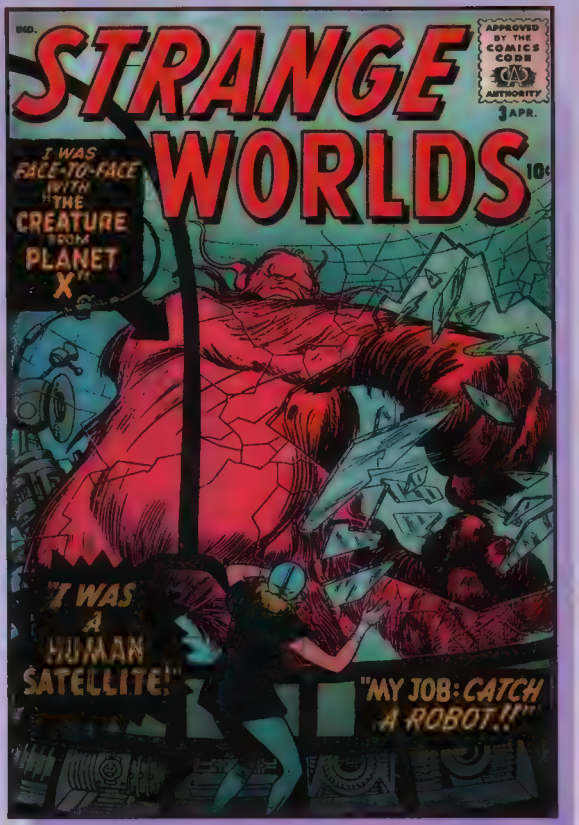
Strange Adventures #147 (Dec 1962, below) has both an excellent Anderson sci-fi cover and contains one of the highlights of the Atomic Knights series... "The King Of New Orleans".

SEPT. NO 144
STRANGE ADVENTURES
12¢
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
THOSE STRANGE PLANTS...EMITTING AN EERIE BLACKNESS THAT'S SPREADING OVER THE ENTIRE EARTH...
WE CANNOT ALLOW THE ATOMIC KNIGHTS TO DESTROY THE "SECRET WEAPON" WE ARE USING TO CONQUER THE EARTH!
WE'VE GOT TO DESTROY THE PLANTS... BY BURNING THEM UP!
AN AMAZING Atomic Knights ADVENTURE... "WHEN THE EARTH BLACKED OUT!"

COLOR GALLERY

STRANGE WORLDS
WE'VE GOT TO GET AWAY FROM THAT RAY BEFORE WE'RE ALL DESTROYED!
"I WAS A PRISONER ON THE PLANET OF PLUNDER!"
THEY WARNED US THAT NO EARTHMEN COULD ESCAPE THE PLANET OF PLUNDER!




STRANGE WORLDS
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
3 APR.
10¢
I WAS FACE-TO-FACE WITH "THE CREATURE FROM PLANET X"!
"I WAS A HUMAN SATELLITE!"
"MY JOB: CATCH A ROBOT!!"

These three issues of *Strange Worlds* exemplify how the phoenix of Marvel rose from the ashes of Atlas, in a combination of the creative guidance of Stan Lee with the artistic talents of Jack Kirby and Steve Ditko. At "pre-hero Marvel" as at DC, science fiction was an integral force and the genre of choice; the pre-hero books are filled with prototypes of characters that would later make their appearances in the Marvel universe.

STRANGE WORLDS © 1995 MEG ARR

The Lamont Larson Collection: A Window to the Early Golden Age

BY PATRICK M. KOCHANEK, M.D.

Recently, through persistence, and the good graces of Joe Tricarichi, Jon Berk was able to acquire the original listing of books in the Lamont Larson Collection. I was fortunate to scrounge up a copy from a fellow Golden Age collector. Within ten seconds of examining it, I knew that this list would provide some great insight into the Golden Age, and would be worth the time to look it over with a more careful eye. Jon Berk had written such a masterful piece on the Larson collection (see *Overstreet's Comic Book Quarterly* #6), that it seemed logical to see if the combination of the information he provided and the data found in this list couldn't help us to better understand the early Golden Age more clearly. I have very little free time these days, and apologize for not having been able to contribute more to *CBM*. My own collecting interests certainly have not waned. Fortunately, this week I am sitting on a beach near a lake in Syracuse, Indiana on our annual family week at the cottage, so — here goes.

After the excitement of seeing what DCs were in the collection, I calmed down and began a more calculating look at this historical data. I have always been interested in obtaining hard data on what Golden Age books are truly scarce. With this list in hand, several questions immediately came to mind.

(1) Was a particular company or a specific title any more difficult to obtain than another during the early Golden Age?

(2) Was any month or era in the early Golden Age particularly scarce? Are our myths about scarcity based on fact?

(3) How did this information stack up to my previously published (and unpublished) data tabulated from sales lists (see *CBM* #11-14)?

Recall from Jon Berk's article that up until mid 1939, Larson was missing a lot of books at the newsstand. However, the beauty of this collection is that in summer of 1939, Lamont Larson basically told the store owner that he did not want to miss any more books, so after mid 1939, we are not left with a collection based on the whims of monthly selections by a 10 year old kid, rather, (and how fortunate) the collection is comprised of books selected—to a large extent—by distribution efficiency of the competing companies. This makes the Larson collection list (along with the Church collection list) relatively unique. Also, being a complete listing of the collection, it was my opinion that the information could provide some important objective clues to the relative efficiency of the distribution of various companies in the early Golden Age. Remarkably, I think that you will become convinced that I was correct in this assumption.

Relative Scarcity

To begin this adventure, let us look at the issue of comic scarcity in the early 1940s—comparing various company's. In my opinion, this is the most valuable and objective information available in the list.

To address this issue, I calculated the percent of published total of each of the major companies books that were found in the collection. Forgive me if I missed a book or

two out of all of the published books from each of the major companies. At I took my best shot (thanks to Gerber and Overstreet). In an attempt to obtain a representative cross section of the collection, I focused on the major publishers of non-reprint material.

I began the survey with November, 1939, and continued it up until the end of the Larson collection, September 1941. Although the Larson collection is comprised of books purchased as early as 1935, I selected November 1939 for the beginning point of this comparison, because this is where the distributor and newsstand determined the composition of the collection, rather than Larson.

In addition, at that point both DC and Timely were operational (i.e., *Marvel* #1 had just been published), and all of the major companies were publishing at least one title by early 1940. The superhero era was just beginning to boom. I stopped the data analysis in September 1941 because the Larson collection stops at that point.

Maybe we should pause here for a second. From the collectors standpoint, one of the most remarkable features of the Lamont Larson collection is that there is NOT ONE SINGLE BOOK in the collection with a cover date later than September 1941. NOT ONE! This is true despite about 25 books in the collection dated September 1941. The collection just comes to a screeching halt. This is strong evidence that Lamont basically had the store owner put aside one of everything (non-humor) from mid 1939 until saying "stop" in August 1941... so that books with a September, 1941 cover date are the last ones. Recall that Jon Berk reported that at that point in time, Lamont switched to reading mystery paperback books.

There were over 500 mystery paperbacks in the Larson Collection. What a tragedy. Imagine if there were 500 additional comics from October 1941 to 1942 or 43. There is a take home point in this. If anyone offers you a Larson with a cover date later than September 1941, it is a fraud and is not from the Larson collection —PERIOD.

TABLE 1. Composition of Larson Collection by publishing company between November 1939 and September 1941.

KEY
Company: Approximate number of issues printed by the company/Number of books present in the Larson collection (Percent of the total number of issues printed by each company that were present in the Larson collection)

DC: 113/169 (67%)
Fox: 70/127 (55%)
Quality: 58/97 (60%)
Fiction House: 51/83 (61%)
Centaur: 46/79 (58%)
MLJ: 47/72 (65%)
Fawcett: 32/63 (51%)
Timely: 39/54 (72%)
Nedor: 27/43 (63%)
Lev Gleason: 14/17 (82%)

(See text for specific explanation of symbols)

A Number Of Surprises

Going back to the data (see Table #1), we will now discuss surprise number one. Between November 1939 and September 1941, the two major companies publishing non-reprint material were not DC and Timely, or DC and Fawcett, rather, they were DC and Fox respectively, and this is reflected not only in the number of titles and issues printed, but also by the composition of the Larson collection (see Table 1). For example, 169 DCs were published between November 1939 and September 1941, and 67% of these were found in the Larson collection. During this same period, there were 127 Fox issues, 70 (or 55%) of which were found in the Larson collection. Obviously Fox was a much bigger player than most collectors realize (except for the hard core Lou Fine collectors). The two companies issuing the smallest number of books were Lev Gleason and Nedor.

The cover of *Flash Comics* #9 from the Lamont Larson collection. September 1939 is the last month in 1940 with consistent distribution to the Nebraska drug store where the Larson books originated. It is also the last month where the name "Lamont" appears on the books. See text for more detailed explanation.

The second point clearly seen in these data is that despite a large number of companies with great diversity in both their maturity and the number of the titles published, there is remarkable consistency in the percent of each company's published issues that ended up at that Nebraska drug store and, thus, in the Larson collection. No company had fewer than 51% of its published books during that period in the collection. Similarly, no company did better than having 82% of its published books in the collection. In fact, Lev Gleason, with only 17 books published in this era is somewhat of an anomaly in this regard with 82% (see Table 1).

There are, however, two other surprises. Despite much hype by dealers and collectors about the poor distribution and scarcity of the Timelys, over 72% of the Timelys published in the same era were found in the Larson collection (see Table 1). This is the second highest percentage of any company, arguing strongly against poor distribution or relative scarcity of these books on the newsstand. What may be misleading collectors is that Timely just had a very small number of titles published during the early Golden Age, so when a Golden Age collection is found, there is almost always a smaller number of Timelys than DC, Fox, MLJ, and Fiction House books.

Also, there are so many Marvel baby boomers, and just a small number of these people branching out into the Golden Age market creates great demand for what amounts to probably similar supplies. Remarkably, there were only 54 Timelys published between November 1939 and September 1941... but 39 of these 54 books are in the Larson Collection!

A Bit More Scarce

The other mild surprise is that Fawcett is the company with the smallest percent of published books making their way into the Larson Collection (just 51% of the published Fawcetts between November 1939 and September 1941 (see Table 1). This time period represents a very early era for Fawcett. Many of the titles such as *Slam Bang*, *Wow*, or *Master* were either prototype books that were discontinued, or were titles that were revamped dramatically with the over-

whelming success of this company's single major character, Captain Marvel.

These early non-successful titles may be a bit more scarce than currently appreciated because of the relative lack of demand for these books. For example, going through the *Photo Journal*, I must say that I have seen MANY copies of Fawcetts published between 1942-1946. However, I haven't seen as many copies of the first 10 or 15 issues of *Master*. However, I am not concluding that books from any one company published between mid 1939 and 1941 are particularly scarce. Rather, the take home point from this section is that the efficiency of distribution for ALL of the different comic book publishing companies between November 1939 and September 1941 was remarkably similar across the board, even in rural Nebraska.

Let me make one final point supporting my position. Even the sporadically published Timelys (i.e., *Red Raven* #1, *Daring Mystery*) and the obscure titles published during the last few breaths of Centaur like *Stars And Stripes* #s 2 and 3 and *Fantoman* #2 made it to Nebraska. Heck, even Lev Gleason, a new company in the early 40s with just a scant few published books had nearly complete representation between November 1939 and September 1941 in the Larson collection. Although we cannot objectively assess the issue of relative scarcity of distribution between companies based on the Larson collection list for books published before 1939, my sense from what is on the list is that this consistency of distribution was reasonably good even back into 1938. In conclusion, distribution of comics as early as mid 1939 was unbelievably good for all of the companies, supporting the contention that current demand pressures rather than differences in the initial supply during the early Golden Age (mid 1939-1941) governs the availability (and prices) of these books.

Temporal Composition

Graphing the temporal composition of the Larson books from the major non-reprint companies between November 1939 and September 1941 is very revealing (See Figure 1). There are four major findings.

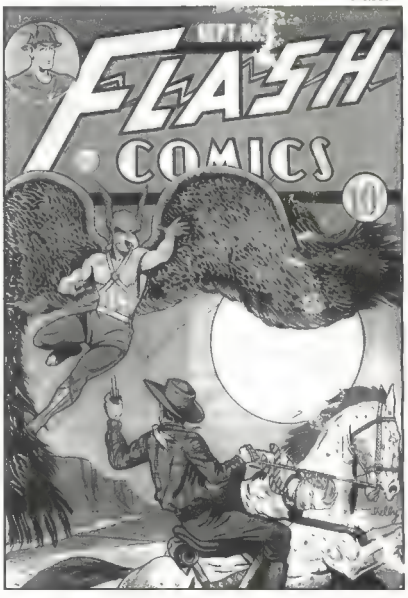
Finding #1 - There is an almost complete absence of books in the collection with a cover date of November 1940. Specifically, there is only ONE book from these 9 publishing companies with a November 1940 cover date, *Mystery Men* #16. In fact, in the entire Larson collection (totaling 1012 comics between 1935 and September 1941, including the newspaper reprint comics), there are only three books dated November 1941. For the record, the other two are *Popular* #57 and *Crackajack Funnies* #29 (both Dells).

In addition, it appears that few books were shipped to this drug store between October 1940 and February 1941. There are several possible explanations for this nadir. First (and in my opinion most likely), Tryg Hagen, one of the employees at the drug store died in late 1940 (see Jon Berk's article). Remember that the handwriting of Larson's name on the Larson books was not done by Lamont Larson, rather it was done by the store employees. The handwriting changed in late 1940, specifically, the name Lamont in flowing cursive never appeared after September 1940. For instance, the *Flash* #9 and *All American* #18 both have this "Lamont" written on the book. Both are the last DCs with this signature, and are followed by a hiatus in the individual title runs of between two and four books. It is highly likely that this is more than a coincidence.

Another possible theory is that the distribution of books in this period was lower than in other months. However, I know of no other support for this theory and do not believe this to be the reason. It is my opinion, thus, that this hiatus in and around November 1940 is a function of the aforementioned local circumstances (Tryg[illegible]s death). Thus, unlike the great value of the list for making comparisons between companies, this limitation makes it less valuable for comparing titles over time.

Finding #2 - Examination of Figure 1 reveals that the number of books in the collection peaked in mid 1940 and, with the exception of the aforementioned winter 1940 nadir, basically remained at that level through 1941. As Centaur and Fox began to wane in 1941,

The cover of *Adventure Comics* #54 from the Lamont Larson collection. The Larson was previously erased from the cover. An imprint of the signature is detectable on the original. This is an unusual example of a book in the superhero era found in the Larson collection, but, missing from the Edgar Church (Mile High) collection. Not surprisingly, the Larson copy in this case is the *Gerber Photo Journal* c



Quality and MLJ picked up the slack.

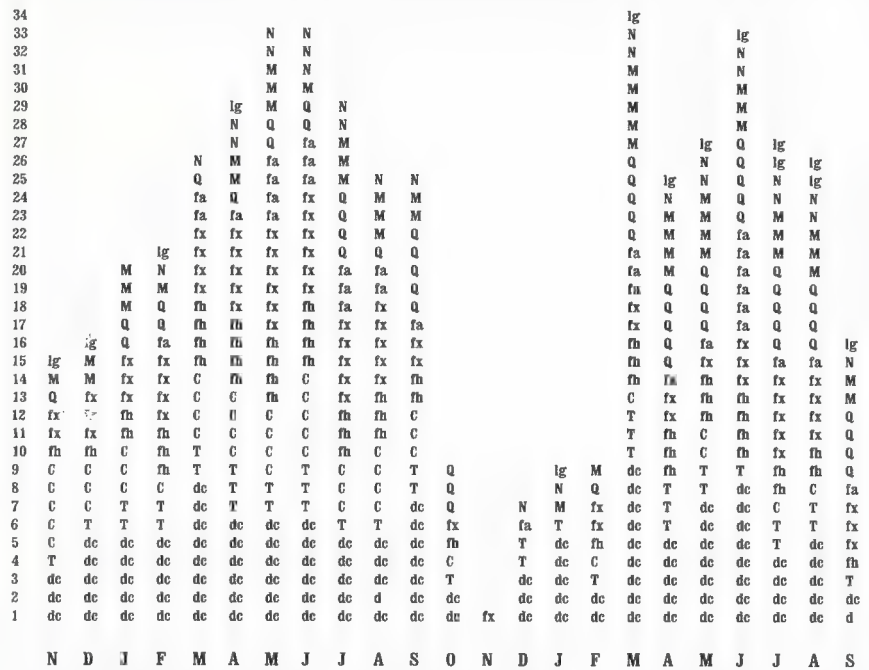
Finding #3 - The third finding again highlights the consistency of distribution between companies. One can clearly see that no single month is completely dominated by one or two companies, rather, each month has most of the published books from each competing company. The fourth finding in the graph dramatically shows the screeching halt that the collection came to in September 1941.

Although not shown in the graph, the Lamont Larson collection list provides one more piece of information about scarcity of specific titles. I provided the overall percent of each companies' published books found in the collection, and also provided you with the data in Figure 1. However, what about the issue of scarcity of specific titles published by a given company? Was there any major title missing or very weakly represented within the collection?

To discuss this, one must first remember that the collection is limited to the early Golden Age, so titles like Green Lantern, *All Select, Sensation, Captain Marvel Jr., All Winners, Wonder Woman*, etc., are totally absent. In general, most titles have between 50% and 100% of their issues represented. The quarterly or bi-monthly issues generally are the closest to complete. For example, 7 of the 10 issues of *Superman*, 2 of the 3 issues of *Captain Marvel*, 4 of 6 issues of *Batman*, and 3 of 3 issues of *Daredevil* published in this era were present in the collection. The monthly titles are generally a little less complete in the era sampled (between 40% and 75%).

The greatest deviation from this pattern is in books published by Nedor and Fawcett which seemed to be the most inconsistent companies. For example, 16 of the 20 published issues of *Thrilling* (over 80%) were present in the Larson collection, but, only 1 of the 10 issues of *Startling* were found. Does this mean that *Startling* received poorer distribution than *Thrilling*? I would be interested in input from Nedor collectors on this point.

FIGURE 1. Graph of number of books (Y axis) in the Larson collection from each of the major publishers each month (X axis) between November 1939 and September 1941. The respective publishing company for each book is given one of the abbreviations, and each entry represents one book from that company (see key below).



SYMBOL KEY: dc = National Periodical Publications (DC), T = Timely, C = Centaur, fh = Fiction House, fx = Fox, F = Fawcett, Q = Quality, M = MLJ, N = Nedor/Standard, lg = Lev Gleason

Similarly, despite 13 of the 19 published issues of Whiz, and 2 of 3 issues of *Captain Marvel* being present in the collection, only 6 of the 18 published issues of *Master* were found in the collection. As previously discussed, this could have something to do with the prototype nature to *Master Comics,* which changed from an oversized to a regular size format with issue #7.

It is possible that the early issues of *Master* and *Startling* were poorly distributed, but, limited demand for these issues has not made us aware of this situation. More information is needed; however, both titles were equally complete in the Edgar Church collection. Two other titles were very nearly complete in early 1940, but, were notably truncated in the collection (after the November 1940 hiatus) despite continuing to be published. The *Planet Comics* run in the Larson collection stops at #7 and the *Target* run stops at #8. For some reason, these two titles did not reappear in the Larson collection after the Winter 1940 hiatus. I have absolutely no idea why this would be the case.

Larson Condition

Although there are several books with problems such as mouse chews or foxing in the Larson collection, in light of the fact that the collection was stored in a barn for 30 years, the overall condition and paper quality of the books is excellent. The average condition of books in the collection is about Fine plus with white pages, strictly graded. Based on my own assessment, the actual grade of the books in the Larson collection is between 1/2 and 1 grade lower than indicated in the list. This is pretty much in line with the maturation of the field of grading that occurred between the 1970s and the 1990s. Recall that the original Larson collection list was prepared in 1975. Grading standards, particularly at the upper end of the condition spectrum, are much more stringent now than in the 1970s. Only a small number of books in the Larson collection are, however, of the same quality as those found in the Edgar Church collection.

Larson Key Books

The Lamont Larson collection contained many notable books, particularly key books in the early Golden Age. Included in the collection were high grade copies of *Action* #1 (see photo), *Marvel* #1, *Batman* #1, *Captain America* #1, *Whiz* #2 (1), *Daring* #1, *Mystic* #1, *Amazing Mystery Funnies* #1, *Wonderworld* #3 (1), *Adventure* #48 and 61, *All Star* #1, *USA* #1, and *More Fun* #52 and 53, among many other first issues. Several other keys were present with either minor or major flaws. *Action* #7, *Detective* #38, *Red Raven* #1, *Captain Marvel* #1, *Amazing Man* #5, *Marvel Mystery* #9, and *Worlds Best* #1 were listed as having minor water damage or some other specific minor flaw. *Superman* #1, *Target* #1, *Planet* #1, *Jumbo* #1, *Master* #1, *Fantastic* #3, and *All American* #16, *New York Worlds Fair 1939*, and *More Fun* #56 (among other important books) all had major flaws such as a coupon out or back cover missing. Nevertheless, Lamont Larson was very meticulous, and even when a coupon is missing from a book, it was removed quite neatly. Essentially all of the Timely keys were present except *Human Torch* #1.

Missing Issues

Several very notable books were missing from the Larson collection. The collection is somewhat spotty, especially before mid 1939. Quite a few key DCs from the early period were missing, including *Detective* #27, 28, 29, 31, and 33, *Adventure* #40 and 42, *Flash* #1, and *Action* #5. A few non-DC keys were also missing including *Jumbo* #2, 4, and 6–9 and *Green Giant* #1. Several key books were missing, being victims of the nadir in the collection in Winter 1940, such as *Hit* #5, *More Fun* #61, *All Star* #3, *All American* #19, *Human Torch* #1, *Silver Streak* #6, and *Top Notch* #9.

Larson vs. Church

Comparison of the Lamont Larson and Edgar Church (Mile High) collections. Comparing the Lamont Larson collection and the Edgar Church collection, other than the differences in state of preservation of the books previously discussed, the other obvious difference is that the Church collection was about 20 times the size of the Larson collection. Thus, there were 19,000 books present in the Church collection not in the Larson collection. This is staggering to comprehend.

The Larson collection did, however, have some books not present in the Church collection. This is particularly true in the very early Golden Age. The earliest issue of *Famous Funnies* in the Church collection was #34 (April 1937), whereas, the Larson collection began with issue #10 (May 1935). Similarly, *Tip Top* #2 (June 1936) was in the Larson collection, while #19 (November 1937) was the earliest issue in the Church Collection.

There are, however, very few examples of book covers dated after 1938 (the superhero era), found in the Larson but not the Church collections. Picking a title like Adventure Comics, and comparing collections from the beginning of the superhero era up until the end of the Larson collection in September 1941, (issues #40-66), to my knowledge, only *Adventure Comics* #s 54 and #62 were present in the Larson but not the Church collection In contrast, *Adventure Comics* #40, 42, 47, 51, 55, 56, 64, 65, and 66 were present in the Church collection but not the Larson collection. To my knowledge, only *Adventure Comics* #57 was missing from both collections. I would anticipate similar findings in other titles that span the same eras.

In Closing

I would like to close by apologizing to the collectors of the more obscure early Golden Age books, the newspaper reprint material, and the 1935-1939 books. Time constraints, and the nature of the Lamont Larson collection (particularly the fact that the distribution to the drug store after mid 1939 governed the composition of the collection) dictated the focus of this article.

Finally, I would like to thank Joe Tricarichi for having prepared such a detailed list (including a brief description of the flaws on each book) 30 years ago, for having kept a copy of the list, and for his willingness to share this historical information with Golden Age collectors. I would also like to thank him for providing the Xerox copies of the covers of *Action* #1 and *Batman* #1 from the Larson collection. I would also like to thank Joseph Smejkal for his willingness to provide me with a copy of the list. ■

PAGE 45: The covers of *Action* #1 from the Lamont Larson collection. *Action* #1 does not have the characteristic "Larson" or "Lamont" written on the cover, since the drug store owner did not mark and set aside books for Lamont until mid 1939.

White Mountain Mile High Lamont Larson
Indian Reservation Denver Cosmic Aeroplane
San Francisco Hawkeye
Carson City Bethlehem
Windy City Pennsylvania

Pedigree Comics

Since our hobby has moved into the 1990s, the pedigree and provenance of certain specific comic book specimens has become the focus of pride, fascination, and controversy! And most of the controversy revolves around two basic questions, "Should pedigree comics command a premium price?" and "What makes a comic a pedigree issue in the first place?" Our efforts to answer these questions and determine how collectors and dealers felt about this heated topic, prompted *CBM* to invite comic book aficionados from all over the country to address this important topic. Here, then are what they had to say on the complex issue of...pedigree comics!

Which comics are really pedigrees... and are they worth the premium price?

Phil Carpenter

Ah yes! The pedigree issue. By definition a pedigree copy means that the book can be traced back to its original owner and maybe even to the store where it was purchased. Although considered the best pedigree books, even some of the Mile High books were purchased second hand by Mr. Church. Thus, not all Mile High comics are true pedigree books by this rigorous definition.

Today the pages of fan publications (*CBG, CBM*, etc.) are filled with books marked with various "pedigrees": Ohio, Mohawk Valley, IRS Collection, LeHigh Valley, etc. Clearly, the definition of what constitutes a pedigree is subjective in some respects. The problem today is that any good (or semi-good) comic find gets named and the "pedigree" begins. So the definition of pedigree has become too relaxed.

Another part of pedigree books concerns condition. Although others might disagree, I consider high grade an essential feature of pedigree books. This makes them the "yard stick" other books are measured against. a VG/FN "pedigree" is worth no more than the same VG/FN book from an "anonymous" collection. By this token I believe that the Larson books that have coupons clipped are not worth the top dollar that people pay for them. In fact, the common thread behind most of today's "pedigree" books are that they are generally in high grade. If the Church books were all GD/VG copies then nobody would have cared as much as they do now.

Thus, there are two important features of pedigree books: lineage and condition. By these criteria, the "IRS Collection" fails in my opinion. The books can only be traced back to a government crook and they are in low grade relative to other pedigree books (like Mile High, Twilight, and Bethlehem comics).

And what about the books that have the condition but not the lineage? Should these books command top dollar like their pedigree counterparts? This summer in San Diego a guy showed me and others an incredibly nectar copy of *Flash Comics* #5. The first thing that came to mind was how it compared to the Mile High copy (I felt it was probably just as good or even better!). I considered this book to be worth just as much as the Mile High copy and would probably buy this one before the Church copy because of the inevitable lower price.

As long as the pedigree books remain the best of their type then they will always command top dollar, especially since people do not seem to want to stop paying multiples of Guide for high grade books.

Beth Holley

Do I feel the value of a pedigree comic to be greater than that of a high grade, non-pedigree comic? No, not in the least. Just because a comic in high grade comes from a collection of exceptionally well preserved books doesn't mean that it should demand a higher premium than a single well preserved book in the exact same grade. The pedigree books just happened to belong to someone, who for whatever reason, happened to take extremely good care of the books. However, there are two categories of books upon which I do place a higher value and would be more than willing to pay the higher cost.

These would be books from the personal collection of individuals who have made a significant contribution to the comic book industry

throughout its history. I would gladly pay double or triple Guide to purchase a book which belonged to Jack Kirby, Murphy Anderson, L.B. Cole, etc. These books hold a value above and beyond the grade. They are part of an historical record and should be valued as such.

I would also be willing to shell out the money necessary to purchase a publisher's file copy. These comics also possess the historical significance and rarity that I feel places them in a class beyond Guide values.

Jon Berk

What is in a name? Well, in the world of comicbooks, quite a bit. Lately, the hobby has been inundated with a series of "names" assigned to a variety of accumulations of books. However, being a "name collection" and being recognized as a "pedigree" collection are, if you will, two different animals. The following are some personal thoughts on the issue of "pedigree" as it applies to Golden Age collections. I am sure that my thoughts will initiate some dissent and that others have different opinions... however, perhaps the issue of pedigree books (as now raised by CBM) will serve as a catalyst by which some consensus may be reached by the hobby as to the meaning and significance of this label being applied to a group of comicbooks.

From my perspective, while a name collection may be discovered, a "pedigree" collection is a "name collection" that had been accepted by the collecting community as such. Generally (but not always) a premium is accorded a book from a pedigree collection over and above the price of a comparably graded "no name" book. For instance, comicbooks from the Edgar Church/Mile High collection are invariably accorded a premium value no matter their grade, while such a distinction (until recently) is usually not accorded books from the Larson or other named collections.

As defined by the dictionary, "pedigree" refers to "lineage ancestry... a known line of descent." That has always been the "kick" about a name/pedigree collection-knowing that the book(s) can be traced back to one original owner/source. By this definition, any group of books with a traceable original owner/original source would technically be a "pedigree." However, in my view, in the comicbook marketplace more is required.

Certain qualities seem to be required for pedigree status: (1) The books have an original owner or original source (such as a drugstore). (2) Consistent high grade condition for the majority of the books. (3) Unless all books are of exceptional quality, the collection should be "large." This criteria is certainly required of Silver Age collections (such as the "White Mountain" collection), but is less critical to early Golden Age books. (4) The collection should contain a number of "key" or "important" books. (5) Although not critical to pedigree status, the books should have a unifying way to be identified, whether it be the date codes of the Church books, the "signature" of the Larson books, the name stamp on the San Francisco books or the "check marks" of the Cosmic Aeroplane/cartooning books. The wonderful collection of high grade Golden Age number 1's discovered by Mark Wilson (dubbed "The Comstock Collection" by others) has a large date stamp on the back cover. The Allentown, Denver, Sarno/Chicago and Windy City books have no pervasive identifying marks. (6) There should be something special about the collection. (7) A "premium" is accorded the book based solely on the "honor" of possessing a book from this type of collection.

Simply, a true "pedigree collection" is a "name collection" for which a premium is paid over and above the market value of a similarly graded book. If a "premium" is made a requirement for a group of books to become a pedigree, very few collections will ultimately qualify.

Ultimately, a pedigree collection is not so much "declared" by its discoverer, as it is accepted by the hobby as such over time. Ultimately market value of a collection by name reference, and whether the books should be accorded a premium value, will be determined by their reception by the collecting community. This reception reflects a subjective judgment of the hobby that makes ownership of such a book "desirable."

A bit vague? Yes it is, but so is the line that converts a name collection into a pedigree.

It is significant to note that the multiple Guide prices paid for books out of "name" collections does not necessarily reflect a premium paid for the ancestry of the book... so much as it reflects a premium paid for the superior condition of the book.

Much of the "premium" paid for Church books represents the price paid for books of superior and unique condition. If a particular Church book generally defines the best condition for a particular Golden Age book, should a price for a Church book reflect the top pricing for that particular Golden Age book? In my view, paying two to three times guide for a book is a reflection of its value in that grade in the marketplace.

Simply, a true "pedigree collection" is a "name collection" for which a premium is paid over and above the market value of a similarly graded book. If a "premium" is made a requirement for a group of books to become a pedigree, very few collections will ultimately qualify. –Jon Berk

With the Church books, the marketplace has accepted an additional 50-100% pure premium for the ancestry of the books. If this viewpoint is accurate, then the multiple Guide prices paid for San Francisco, Larson, Allentown or Chicago copies reflect "true value" in the marketplace for high grade books, not a "premium" for the pedigree. Only the Church books appear to command a true premium even in lower grades.

By these standards the Church collection is clearly a pedigree. So, too, probably is the Larson and San Francisco collections, although less compelling as one factors in the premium paid for any high grade Golden Age comicbook.

While certainly prime name collections (by

the "premium standard" articulated above), the Allentown, Denver, Chicago, and Comstock collections may fail to be true "pedigree" collections. Certainly, although extensive, the Recil Macon collection fails to make the "grade" due to the lower condition of many of the books. The "Windy City" collection, although extensive, has a negative reputation due to the variable page quality on many of the books. (I know one dealer who would not identify a book as a "Windy City" copy because of the negative connotations a few apply to the name of the collection. Whether warranted or not, it is unfortunate to "lose" the lineage of any book from a name collection.)

Of course, if one eliminates the "premium" requirement to be classified as a pedigree, then any "large" high grade group of significant Golden Age comicbooks could become a pedigree.

In conclusion, There is nothing magic about the above observations, but simply my individual view of the unanswerable question of what makes any particular group of books a pedigree.

Shawn Hamilton

As I thought about the two questions posed by CBM I was surprised how strongly I felt about this subject! It also opened the door to several other questions. What is the purpose of a pedigree? And who decides?

I myself can see a reason to name certain accumulations of books a pedigree if it is done to secure a person's achievement for posterity. A perfect example would be the Edgar Church books. Mr. Church had the foresight to create an archive of the new art form called comic books. Be it on purpose or not and for that the Church comics should be duly noted. This scenario is almost unique and qualifies for a pedigree.

However, the Overstreet collection is an example of exactly what has gone wrong with the pedigree process. This collection was put together through dealers, collectors etc. Absolutely anybody with the financial resources could have done the same. This is not meant to degrade the Overstreet collection, but I do not feel it deserves a pedigree.

As for the question "...are they worth it?"... let the market decide, but let it be based on the comics' condition, rarity, and demand, not the name of who once owned them.

Finally, if this were a perfect world a group of books such as the Church collection would not be broken up. But instead, would be preserved as a whole. Because it is as an accumulation of books that is truly unique!

Robert Rogovin

To me, a pedigree collection must come either from an original owner who bought the books of a newsstand or from the publisher's files. Furthermore, the majority of the books should be very high grade and there should be at least one long run of a title.

In many cases, pedigrees are the finest condition books available and because of this they are worth more money. However, if I was a collector looking for, say Batman #10, and I was offered the Mile High Copy in NM+ condition for 5 1/2 times Guide and a non-pedigree copy in NM+ for 2 1/2 times Guide, I would pick the non-pedigree every time.

Michael Naiman

While I have a slight problem with the actual word "pedigree" it has been so "inbred" into the hobby that it doesn't look like it can ever be changed. What are the requirements of a pedigree? For me it must have the following characteristics.

(1) It must originate from a single collector who was the original purchaser.

(2) The books would have to be purchased from a single source (drugstore, candy store, newsstand, etc.).

(3) They must be in a recognizable and identifiable homogenous high grade condition (date stamps, distributors markings, and collectors initials are all OK).

(4) The collection should cover a significant extended time period or run, whether it be #1 issues, genre or specific titles.

(5) The final arbiter of recognition will ultimately be the public's willingness to pay a multiple of Guide for the book over an extended time period.

Would I prefer a pedigree book at a multiple of Guide or the exact same book (in grade) for the NM price? As a collector, give me the non-pedigree. As an investor/speculator, chances are that the pedigree will be more marketable in the future to those who think that it really matters to have a pedigree.

It is truly amazing to note that many collectors/dealers today feel that their "reputations" are defined by "what they own" as opposed to who they are and how they treat others... and sometimes owning a pedigree book seems to be a part of that reputation building process.

Greg Pharis

What is a pedigree? First of all I'm not too excited about the term. I feel as if we're not talking about comics, but about breeding Irish Setters (not that there aren't a few dogs out there, pedigree or not).

But to make this short and sweet, my definition of a pedigree book is as follows. It is any Golden Age or Silver Age comic that is in super high grade (condition VF+ or better with white pages). I don't care who owned it, who found it, or what part of the world it came from (this is information that comic book historians can entertain us with). In other words, the sole criteria for a pedigree book should be it's rare and exceptional original high grade condition.

Should a book with an overall grade of FN+ be given a value of multiples of Guide solely because it came from a particular collection? I would rather pay Guide for a NM copy of the same book from "Mr. Unknown" down the street.

Bruce Ellsworth

Pedigree comic books, to me, are 1) VF or better; 2) white pages; 3) comes from a specific collection usually bought from the newsstand or store by an original owner and, 4) has something specific like an identifying check or area printed or written on the book or white pages that have a specific odor.

I have seen a lot of pedigree-type issues not documented that are as good or better than their pedigree counterparts. To specific people looking for the best there is and expecting to pay 4X Guide, I guess it's okay if you can afford it. I have found comic books in Colorado and New Mexico that are "pedigree-type" issues but I didn't have to pay 4X Guide! A lot of collections turn up but most are mid to low grade and cannot be considered pedigree. Some dealers "pedigree" or "name" everything to be careful.

Gary E. Bishop

Ped*i*gree\n:\ 1: a register recording a line of ancestors; 2 : an ancestral line: Lineage b: the origin and history of something ; 3 a : distinguished ancestry b: recorded purity of breed of an individual or strain syn see ancestry. That's the definition given to us by Webster's but. how does it and when does it apply to comics? The conception over the years has been that any collection of size and significance be termed a "Pedigree." This I believe to be a false assumption.

Recently, a letter written by a "concerned" collector bashing the industry and hobby that we hold dear was brought to my attention. For the most part, the writer goes on with inane ideas about the hobby and its collectors and dealers. Going so far as to badmouth those he deemed unworthy of the hobby. While most of his statements are poorly researched and dra matically over exaggerated he did make one valid point… that being, that too many collections are being coined as "Pedigrees."

While it is true that most "pedigrees" are truly a great find, there are those of lesser value. A collection of high quality books is a rare find in this day and age of collecting and truly does show a "recorded purity" and "origin and history of something", the history of comics. While a low grade run of the same books show the same facts it does not truly render the original luster of the hobby. These collections may better be referred to as simply a collection of books. You can give it a name if you like but to call it a "pedigree" is pushing the envelope. "Pedigree" was and always should be a term for that once in a lifetime collection of books, not the vast collection bought at the local garage sale.

This brings us to the next area of concern; "Are pedigrees worth the cost?" There are some books that are called a "Pedigree" and are priced up to 3X listed value… but are they worth it? Well, that always depends on the consumer. Is a Picasso worth four times the price it sold for fifty years ago? Generally yes, because the buyer feels he is buying a "recorded purity" and "origin and history of something." So which is the correct answer: Are they worth it? Lets remember that a price guide is merely a guide to what the possible value of a product could be. But a piece of history is only worth what a buyer is willing to spend. So while a collection of rare high quality books may be worth two to four times their listed value, a lesser grade collection will be worth significantly less.

But, in answer to the question, no matter what the price paid for the book, it should be bought for the historical value and the enjoyment, not merely due to the fact it is from a "Pedigree" collection. A Superman #1 in high grade is still that, a Startling #3 in high grade is still the same. There is no difference between the one bought at a garage sale or the one from the "Pedigree" collection. A mint book is a mint book.

So it goes. We have discerned that a "Pedigree" collection should be not only of size and significance, but of purity and quality as well. The others can have their names, but only the few should be referred to as a "Pedigree" collection. The value of the books is left up to the buyer. They are the only ones who can decide if they wish to own a part of comic book history, to share in the "origin and history of something."

Dan Greenhalgh

Are pedigree copies really worth it? This question gets answered almost daily in the form of some collector, somewhere who has decided to purchase a pedigree book. Ultimately, it is the collectors choice to decide if a pedigree book is worth the purchase price. My experience is that collectors of pedigree books are generally very knowledgeable, seasoned collectors who, over the course of time, have developed an appreciation for the relative scarcity of pedigree books primarily because of their high grades.

What makes a copy a pedigree? Pat Kochanek's definition of what makes a book a pedigree is right on. Ultimately, however, acceptance of a collection as a pedigree is made by the collecting population as a whole.

Bob Casali

To the serious collector a pedigree is a piece of history and a statement of excellence. To be considered for pedigree status a collection should contain a "significant" number of books.(100 or more) that were collected first hand and stored in the same manner. A favorable storage environment would be a dry, cool and dark with a stable low oxygen, low pollution atmosphere.

Pedigree books must be fresh with the typical signs of aging having been retarded. The paper stock can be white or near white. Colors must be bright and true. Staples shiny or at worst slightly oxidized. The book should be flat and tight with the appearance of being unread.

Yes—they are worth a significant premium if they fit the above criteria, are relatively scarce in high grade (original 10 cent sticker price), and if a sufficient market demand exists for the title. They are worth the price because their condition and history are unique and because there is an intangible yet undeniable cache about the great pedigree collections. Should they be worth more than equally nice books from a "non pedigree" group …probably not.

Additionally, I have two observations on the responsibilities of owning and transferring pedigree books. Certificates should always accompany the pedigree book when transferred from owner to owner. An ownership lineage should be recorded upon each transfer. A crisis point is being reached with many of the top books being sold without the appropriate notations being recorded. How about color Photostats/Xeroxes to permanently record any characteristic anomalies that are inherent with each pedigree book. While many pedigree books are not "perfect" they might have unique identifying characteristics that would identify them as being part of a specific pedigree.

Careful storage and proper handling of pedi gree books is very important to maintaining the significance and integrity of the pedigree.

> "Pedigree" was and always should be a term for that once in a lifetime collection of books, not the vast collection bought at the local garage sale. **—Gary E. Bishop**

Many pedigrees when moved from their original environment to new locals have suffered from a changed storage environment.

Joe Vereneault

In my opinion, a pedigree collection has to satisfy two components. It must have both unusually high quality for the period they represent and a distinction in what is contained (i.e.—all #1's or runs of particular titles) If you think about the established pedigrees (Mile High, Denver, Allentown) they contain these two factors. The Mile High collection consists of long runs of stunning quality while the Denver collection was one hundred plus books of high grade Golden Age #1 titles.

It is for this reason that I am hard pressed to give a pedigree to a Marvel collection (sorry White Mountain fans). A high grade run of Spider-Man #1 to #100 is not unique. There are many collectors who have similar runs that will match or beat those books issue for issue.

Bob Overstreet certainly had a unique collection in depth that it covered, but the quality ran the gamut of Good to Mint. I don't see how a VG Captain Marvel #15 should be perceived as something special because Bob once owned it!

The thing that has made the Mile High so valuable is the fact that many of the runs have stayed together. While it may be possible to find a Batman #13 that matches the Mile High copy, I guarantee you will never find a run from #1-#30 that comes close to the Mile High. In many cases, the established pedigrees contain issues of the nicest known copies and the collector pays a premium for owning the best or near best copy.

Harley Yee

What is a pedigree? A large or significant high grade collection which is 80% or more VF/NM or better with nice paper quality. It has to be a large collection, like the Mile High/Edgar Church books. That collection had more than 19,000 books from 1936 to the mid 1950s... many in NM. Also significant are the Allentown books which included the best known Detective #27, Captain America #1, plus many other high grade #1's and keys. It clearly qualifies too.

Are they worth it? Most pedigree comic books now start at three times Guide and there never seems to be a shortage of buyers... that means these collectors do feel that it is worth it. Collectors like pedigrees because 1) the books represent a "unique" specimen of something that has many copies; 2) the general uniformity of condition makes it easier to buy via mail order. Most know what to expect from a Mile High (very white pages), a Larson (white pages and traces of foxing), a San Francisco (NM+ with bone white pages), etc; (3) Most pedigrees can be traced to the original owners; 4) There is generally a high return on the original investment and dealers are willing to work on a smaller margins.

Bottom line... collectors want to own something special and so there will always be buyers for pedigree material.

While it may be possible to find a *Batman* #13 that matches the Mile High copy, I guarantee you will never find a run from #1-#30 that comes close to the Mile High. In many cases, the established pedigrees contain issues of the nicest known copies and the collector pays a premium for owning the best or near best copy. -Joe Vereneault

Tim Collins

What defines a pedigree collection? This is an interesting question. In the final analysis, it will be answered by the market as a whole. As the purchaser of the famous (or more likely infamous) IRS Collection, I have a fair bit of experience dealing with this issue. First some background: The IRS collection is one of the most massive private collections ever sold. To wit, it is comprised of some 60,000+ different comic books from 1914-1990. The collection was put together over roughly a twenty year period. Obviously, many of the comics were bought from secondary sources such as dealers but, thousands of comics were bought directly from the stands. The vast majority of older comics are in low to mid grades. The collection came up for sale as the original collector was caught embezzling money from the Colorado Department of Revenue to feed his collecting habit. The embezzler wanted one copy of every comic made!

The IRS Collection was named by Bruce Ellsworth (formerly of Bruce's Comics in Sante Fe, NM) who helped the Colorado Department of Revenue deal with the collection. Bruce is a respected dealer and an Overstreet advisor.

I doubt that anyone would say that one owner collections such as the Mile High/Edgar Church collection or the San Francisco/Riley collection are not pedigrees. In my opinion, the so called "More Fun Collection" (albeit large) does not fit the "pedigree" collection criteria. Although it consists of many high grade Golden Age comics, they were not bought off the stands by one person.

So, where does that leave the IRS Collection? Here we have thousands of high grade books bought off the stands and thousands of books bought from other sources. At first, with the notoriety of the collection, I described it as a pedigree collection. I made certificates and noted in catalogs that these comics came from the collection. The customer reaction was mixed, lots of people thought that it was really interesting and thought the story added value to the comics they bought... and others felt that it was inappropriate that I made certificates for the portion of the collection that was low to mid grade.

I would say that my customers were split about fifty-fifty on whether they cared whether the comic was from the IRS Collection. Many people simply threw the certificate away (I think this is silly, I go to a lot of effort and it doesn't cost anything to keep it and it is a real-

ly bizarre story!).

But let me ad that I do not charge a premium for IRS Collection comics. When you buy an IRS Collection comic, you get a book at market prices PLUS a really unique story behind it. So, the market has responded that the IRS Collection is not a pedigree collection and still lots of people find enjoyment from owning a comic from the IRS Collection because of the unusual history behind the books. I feel that the IRS material is: a chance to own a part of a collector's dream... that went awry!

Furthermore, a one-owner collection of ten Golden Age books does not make a pedigree in my opinion. Currently, is seems every new Golden Age collection found acquires a name. This is smart on the dealers part, but bad for the market as a whole. Is the White Mountain copy of AF #15 really worth $45K? I personally doubt it (I grade it only a VF). Is the Mile High copy of Captain America #1 worth 3 times Guide?

You bet! It's probably the best copy around! The purpose of a pedigree collection is to own the cream of the crop! So, in conclusion, I think that a pedigree collection must pass these tests:

1) It must be comprised of only Golden Age books.

2) Any books bought from secondary sources must be bought in the Golden AGE (Edgar Church bought back issues from a store in Denver in the early '40s.

3) It must be a massive collection - 1,000 plus books.

4) The material must be high grade (VF or better on average).

5) The material must have exceptional page quality. Thanks for reading my opinion.

Matt Schiffman

What is a pedigree collection? Though I might not be able to tell you definitively exactly WHAT a pedigree collection IS, I can much easier tell you WHAT IS NOT a pedigree collection. The reference point for a pedigree collection has always been the Edgar Church "Mile High Collection" and it basically set the parameters for what a pedigree collection should be. It had scope, continuity, condition, original ownership, accumulation references, and great promotion upon purchase by Chuck. Could we really ask for more? No. Yet, this established the ultimate or the ideal of a collection. Unfortunately, if this was the standard "hard and fast" rule, we would have only deemed to grant pedigree "status" to one or two other finds since 1977. Comic fandom will not stand for so few to be "worthy", and in their need to have new pedigrees brought to the market have bent the rules, modified and excused certain aspects of a "find" in order to tout the pedigree label.

I've looked at countless lists of collections that have recently been uncovered. Some had a pedigree name given to them while others have not. Some deserved the name, but most (in my opinion) did not. So many questions must be answered and blended correctly. What if a collection is scattered about in content or the majority are low in grade? Most would dismiss this as NOT a pedigree, but what if the scattered issues were all great key issues, first appearances and #1's? What if the low grade run was a full run of Detective or Action? What if Bob Kane or Alex Schomburg's personal collections saw the light of day? If I owned an issue, you could bet I would be more than pleased to say that "this is THE Schomburg copy!" But where is the line drawn? Do we hold the same rigorous standards to the dwindling collections as they are discovered or do we lessen our demands?

It will soon come to pass that most of the great Golden Age collections, and even most of the great Silver Age collections will be brought to market. Therefore, theoretically, we should have no more pedigree collections exposed. But what do we call the "second generation" collections of one of our "hobby celebrities" or top-notch collectors when it is brought to the market in the years to come? I've heard both sides of the coin regarding the Overstreet collection. Some say it is just a collection by a famous person to our hobby and others say it is very much a pedigree collection. Unfortunately, most fall on the personal side. If you own one of Bob's books, then a pedigree IT IS. But if you don't, why give it the status of pedigree and then have to pay pedigree prices? Objectivity is the key, but here we go again. Who is objective in this market?

The IRS collection came up for sale as the original collector was caught embezzling money from the Colorado Department of Revenue to feed his collecting habit. The embezzler wanted one copy of every comic made! **–Tim Collins**

Paying a premium for a pedigree is almost moot at this point in the game. With multiples being paid for unnamed books is really the rule rather than the exception that pedigrees had previous had exclusive claim to.

By the way, I have a copy of FF #48 from the "Matt" Collection for sale... if you are interested.

Jason Ewert

Are pedigree copies really "worth it?" It depends. You have to look at the quality of the pedigree in proportion to the price multiple you are paying. There are a lot of pedigree books out in the marketplace nowadays. Some pedigrees are stunning and some are a bunch of average quality comics. When you want the best, you obviously have to pay for them. Buying a Mile High at 4 to 5 times NM Guide, a San Francisco at 3 to 4 1/2 times NM Guide, a nice Larsen at 1 1/2 to 3 times NM Guide, or an Allentown at 3 to 5 times NM Guide, will get you THE best in most cases. This may seem like steep multiples, but you know you will always have THE best. I feel that it is "worth it." When you go to sell your copies 5 to 10 years from now you can probably expect your book to be worth the same multiple of the NM price at the time, as these multiples have proven to be pretty consistent over the last 100 years. If you are buying a lesser known pedigree with a very nice appearance, but with average interior and pages, you may be paying 2 to 3 times NM Guide. In this case you are not

buying THE best, you are paying a steep price, and there may be a significant number of copies of the same issue in the same grade which are non-pedigree for a lot less money. Here, this pedigree might not be "worth it."

What makes a comic a pedigree? It's unfortunate that anyone has the power to deem any comic book in any grade a "pedigree" if that person feels their comic is a good representation of condition. TRUE pedigrees, however, can be defined as a comic book which is used as the basis of unsurpassed quality and condition when judging all other copies in existence of the same title and number. Most books fall significantly short of this and should never be labeled "pedigree."

Fandom will not stand for so few to be "worthy" ... in their need to have new pedigrees they have bent the rules... modified and excused certain aspects of a "find" in order to tout the pedigree label! **–MATT SCHIFFMAN**

ALAN BARTHOLOMEW

Pedigree Thoughts... Mile High... White Mountain... Gaines file copy... words that conjure up thoughts of either perfection, or Madison Avenue hype. It was not until my first trip to the San Diego Comic Show that I saw perfection in the form of the Mile High pre Batman issues of Detective Comics. I asked the owner to take them down and show them to me just so that I could say that I saw and actually held one. They were so incredibly bright and fresh, looking barely a year old, though I knew they were more than fifty. I experienced Madison Avenue more recently when I viewed a dull, browning Mile High book that looked like it was nearer the end of its life than the beginning.

For the first seven years of collecting I never bought a pedigree comic. Not only did I rarely see them, but when I did they were outrageously priced. Not that I minded paying over guide, I just didn't want to be the "sap" paying way over Guide. Yet in the past two years I have bought a number of books from pedigree collections. In the following paragraphs I'll try to give you the questions that I had to ask (and answer) before I started buying pedigree books.

(1) What is a pedigree? My criteria is... to be worthy of a pedigree a book must be part of a collection that has the following characteristics: (a) one original owner that bought or received all of the books (b) minimal structural defects (there are minimal tears, creases, stresses) (c) intense ink reflectivity (i.e. the cover is glossy) (d) white/off-white pages (e) must be 1963 or earlier (f) sufficient quantity of books which uniformly posses these qualities.

Whenever I refer to the word pedigree in the following areas I refer to collections that meet all of the these conditions.

(2) What if someone assembled a collection by purchasing books from others? For me, if it's not one original owner then it's a provenance, not a pedigree. Buying a book from the Overstreet collection (for example) does not guarantee that the book was actually bought off the newsstand by Bob Overstreet himself, or that it is a high-grade copy (although many books from Bob's collection actually do meet these two criteria!). I feel privileged to have some of his books in my collection (Bob — they are well taken care of) because of their connection to someone who has such an important impact on the hobby... but I didn't pay a "pedigree premium" for them.

(3) Why not include books after 1963? Books after 1963 in high-grade are much more common than books in high-grade before 1963. It doesn't seem that important to track pedigrees when there are so many. Books before 1964 in high-grade, however, are often from one of the pedigree collections. That doesn't mean that there isn't a better copy out there, it's just that I don't see them any better very often.

(4) What do you mean by sufficient quantity? I'm not sure. It's like the classic philosophical problem of defining a beard: how many hairs and of what length are required to have a beard? You'll know it when you see it. Trying to track every 5, 10, or 25 book collection that comes along just doesn't seem very practical to me.

(5) How many pedigree collections are there? I don't know. I am sure there are more out there than I know about but certainly fewer than are advertised as pedigree. I have heard of several pedigree collections that were purchased by only one or two individuals and so have never gotten the publicity that the Mile High collection did.

(6) Why are there so many collections advertised as pedigree? This question is pretty easy. Sellers think collectors will pay more for a book if it comes from a named collection. I've seen collections that were really just low-grade to mid-grade books collected by a single owner being touted as a pedigree. I'm always interested in the story behind the original owner and how the collection was found by the dealer, but it doesn't affect my decision on whether on not to buy the books.

There have also been collections that were high-grade but did not have great page quality or cover gloss. Since this is the usual condition for non-pedigree, high-grade books this isn't enough to command a premium. Sometimes a pedigree collection will have a book in this condition — in which case I don't feel it is worth a premium either.

In defense of advertisers, however, I think it can still be useful to know if book came from a collection of books that have uniform qualities. If someone tells me that a book is a Larson and has the typical qualities of the collection (light foxing, good gloss, excellent pages), then I am more about the condition than if I just knew the grade.

(7) Are pedigrees over-graded? It's not untypical to see over-grading on pedigrees. In one sense these books have great cover gloss and page quality that is hard to factor with structural quality into a single grade. Yes, I know there has been an attempt to do this but each of these qualities is difficult enough to standardize on its own without the added complexity of trying to combine them together. Even if someone defines each of these characteristics for a book it can still be hard to visualize the true condition of a pedigree. Sometimes the book

has to be seen to be understood.

I've also seen low-grade, dull, brown-paged copies of pedigree books advertised at multi ples of guide for no reason other than they were part of pedigree collection. This seems silly to me.

(8) How do pedigrees compare to non-pedigrees? It depends. I have even seen a case where I liked the very good pedigree better than I liked the VF+ non-pedigree because the pedigree was so much prettier. The pedigree copy had white pages and a light-grey cover unaffected by the usual yellow. I ended up getting the VF+ non-pedigree, but I still don't know whether or not I made the right decision. I have also seen comics that aren't pedigree but are truly better copies in every way including page quality, cover gloss, and structurally.

(9) If the non-pedigree is a better copy than a pedigree, is it worth more? It would be to me. Although with the way that people price comics sometimes I wouldn't buy either the pedigree or the non-pedigree.

(10) What about distribution marks? If you don't like distribution dates or other marks on books you probably won't like pedigrees. Mile Highs usually have distribution dates and quantities on the top part of the cover. White Mountains often have a distribution year on the cover and the distribution date on the first page. These marks don't bother me at all as long as the book is exceptional in every other way. Besides, they provide additional confirmation that the book is part of a particular collection.

(11) How will people know which books are actually pedigrees 20 years from now? It will be harder and harder to trace the ownership of pedigrees as the years go by. I only buy books I that I plan to keep forever so I'm not too worried about this question. Still, I pay attention because sometimes I have to sell books so that I can buy other books that I want more. As long as the condition on the pedigree is exceptional, I am not overly concerned about trying to prove that it is part of a pedigree.

(12) What are pedigree comics worth? I've given up trying to figure out what comics are "worth". I only know what comics are worth to me. Sometimes that value is a multiple of Guide and sometimes it's a fraction of Guide — depending on how scarce it is and desirable it is to me.

(13) Why buy pedigree comics? I want to see comic books the way that their creators intended to see them. I want to see them the way they were when they came out on the newsstand. I want to see the colors and art unaffected by yellowing and wear. I want a book that knocks my socks off.

I do not understand people who have written to CBM complaining about people that buy high-grade comics as if they love comics less than a low-grade collector. Carried to its logical conclusion, we should have left the Sistine Chapel covered with centuries of dirt and grime so we can appreciate it more. I buy high-grade comics because I love comics. Period.

I have nothing against collecting lower grade comics. My collection consists of books ranging from poor to near mint and only death or a better copy is going to pry those copies out of my hands. I could collect only pedigree copies but because of their price and scarcity, that would mean a much smaller and less interesting collection.

mium (premiums are being realized on non-pedigreed books as well). The amount of the premium, of course, is dictated by the market either way.

Pedigrees in general? The only true, unflinching, white-light-of-truth pedigree is the Mile High/Edgar Church collection. For me, any other accepted pedigree falls somewhere further down the scale.

It can be argued that major icon covers and/or keys from the "lesser" pedigrees which exceed the Mile High copy in condition should bring more. Argue away... the market will still determine the actual level of the premium.

To a dealer, if three or four willing collectors buy into a given pedigree "find", the profits are great, and perhaps some history can happen. But, even to the seasoned collector, premiums paid for books from the myriad of "pretender pedigrees" can be confusing.

If a smaller grouping of high grade books is found, say 50-150 books, then that's all it is... no pedigree... just a high grade "find". The temptation to push a "find" into a "pedigree" is great for obvious reasons. The market will out.

Green River, Ohio, "D" collection, Larsen, Hawkeye, Kansas City, Cosmic Aeroplane, San Francisco, Bethlehem, Allentown, Comstock, ... the list gets long. The relative values associated with these groupings are reflected by the prices they will bear, by sellers, to the collectors. The flavor of the history which defined the find, helps push the goods to a pedigree. The "Larsen" collection is a reasonable pedigree because of the story behind them. But finding a stack of books in a cooler in De Buke in and of itself won't do it.

Trying to track every small collection that comes along doesn't seem very practical. **–Alan Bartholomew**

Steven Gentner

What is a Pedigree Collection? I don't believe there are many. A pedigreed collection in my mind is a large group of books whose provenance, condition, content, continuity, and importance are clearly established. The same person, buying from the same place, under the same conditions, and keeping them all together is also pertinent. The last, and perhaps most important factor is that the collecting public can get behind, believe in, and support the contentions of the pedigree. Books meeting all these conditions, as a whole, would constitute a pedigree collection.

Are Pedigreed books worth it? Taking a point from my "pedigree" argument above... if I believe that a book offered to me is a pedigree, and in glorious condition, I would pay a pre-

Ron Pussell

In recent years the use of pedigree designations has risen significantly throughout fandom. One has only to check the supposed increased value to understand the justification for this pedigree designation. It seems every week brings a new pedigree found by some dealer. It should be noted that all true

pedigrees are collections that are entering the marketplace for the first time. They are never books that some collector/investor has accumulated over the past 10-15 years. With kudos to Bob (Overstreet), a good friend, books from his comic book collection do not justify any premium value, and he will be the first to agree with this opinion. Otherwise the finest Timely pedigree would be the famed "Alhambra" Collection (Hello John & Nan), and the finest DC pedigrees would be both the "Coronado Collection" (Hello Nick, Gary, & Lane) and the "Dentist's" Collection (Hello David). We here at the Book Den would only offer books from the legendary "High Sierra" Collection.

Unfortunately for many collectors caught up in this frenzy, early pedigrees were not established this way. In the past, collections surfaced here and there, and once in a great, great while a collection would surface of unbelievable quality.

As this collection began to circulate throughout fandom, collector/investors started to search for books from this specific collection. It is this search by collector/ investors that provides the impetus for a pedigree designation. Collector/investors began to look for issues that may have been sold previously to others.

Now if we, the collector/ investors, keep making inquiries to a dealer about a specific collection they have purchased, then we will both need to (at some point) refer to this collection by some designation other than "the batch of books you purchased in mid-November of 1994." Viola...the birth of a new pedigree collection!

The important point in all this is simply that you, the collector/investors of comic fandom always create the true pedigree designations and attach premium prices to this pedigree. It should never be the dealer that both creates the pedigree and declares the premium value attached to this pedigree.

What's your opinion on the controversial topic of pedigree comics? *CBM would like to know! Send your comments to: CBM Pedigree Poll, P. O. Box 180900, Coronado, CA 92118 or FAX them to (619) 437-1993.*

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Congratulations from Gemstone Publications and CBM!

Continued from page 35

cover. A "G" followed by a date can be found on most of the San Francisco books. The "G" stands for "Gilboy" the name of the distributor for the particular store from which the Reilly books were purchased. Due to the early discovery of this collection no original list was made. One must rely solely on either the rubber stamp or arrival date to identify a San Francisco book.

San Francisco Value

Many would rate the San Francisco collection as second best, due to the quantity (near-full runs of all titles from 1940-1945) and quality of books in it. San Francisco's have supple white pages and exhibit beautiful colors and very rich gloss. The San Francisco's from 1942 to 1945 represent the best of the collection, due to the fact that Reilly never got a chance to read them, and thus damage them. Most of these copies are Near Mint to Mint. Although many San Francisco copies are technically better in grade than some Mile Highs, the colors and overall appearance is not as fresh. Still, the quality of a San Francisco copy is relatively unsurpassed, and copies fetch on average 3x to 4x *Guide* in the market.

The Larson Collection

Considered by many to be the third best pedigreed collection. The history of the Larson collection had been a mystery until 1994 when Jon Berk located Larson himself and found out how the collection was amassed. Larson began reading comics around the age of 9. He grew up in a small farming town in Northeast Nebraska near Omaha. He purchased his comics from a place called Cruetz Drug Store. After some time had passed, Larson realized he was unable to get copies of all of the comics he wanted in time, so the owner suggested the he put aside copies for Larson every week. To identify them the owner had Larson's name written on them. As a result, most of the Larson books from 1939 on have that unmistakable signature on them.

When Larson finished reading his comics, he would put them away in storage. Because of his attention to carefulness, his collection is one of the finest existing today. When the family moved in 1940 the comics were stored out in a barn.

Larson eventually stopped reading comics some time in late 1941. Years later, Larson's mother sold the comics to a local antique dealer, Dwain Nelson. After holding on to them for about 18 months he sold them off, and they eventually found their way into Joe Tricarichi's possession in the mid 1970's.

Because the collection spanned the prime years of the Golden Age, almost all of the major keys were present in high grade: *Action* #1, *All-American* #16, *Batman* #1, *Captain America* #1, *Human Torch* #1, *Marvel* #1, *More Fun* #52,53, *Submariner* #1, *Superman* #1, and *Whiz* #1. Of note, some missing keys included: *All Star* #3, *Adventure* #40, *Detective* #27, *Flash* #1, and *Detective* #1. Amazingly, the runs were fairly complete, with minimal break. For example, the *Action* run of #1-39 was missing only nine various issues. The average grade overall was VF/NM on the later books and Fine on the earlier ones (1935-1938).

Common characteristics of a Larson include foxing (brown speckles on edges of pages or cover) and occasional water stains, due to their storage in a barn for many years. The exposure to moisture caused the foxing and water stains. The pages are white to off-white and are very bouncy in texture. The covers are very glossy with deep colors. Very few display technical defects.

Lamont Larson Identification

Identifying a Larson is quite easy, because practically every known copy has some kind of identifying mark on the front cover. In all, five identifiable markings can exist on a Larson: "ON", "PN", "Lamont", "Larson", or a number. Any combination of these five markings can exist on a cover. The "ON" stands for Omaha News and the "PN" stands for Publisher News, both distributors. The name identifies the collector himself and can be written as "Lamont Larson" or "L Larson". Finally, a call-back number, usually two digits, but can be three, is occasionally written on the cover as well. Interestingly, the same number was used for every issue in a particular title; for instance, "88" represents the run of *Marvel Mystery*, "89" for *Sub-Mariner*, "112" for *Red Raven*, and so forth. These markings are written either in a flowing cursive handwriting style, or in a more sharp cursive style.

The markings, along with the characteristic foxing and occasional water stains make identifying Larsons fairly easy. If a question arises, one should consult with Jon Berk or check the master list to compare grades.

Lamont Larson Value

Larsons cross the fine line that exists for the collector who loves pedigrees but hates writing and small defects, such as foxing (both of which are prevalent of Larsons). If one is looking for perfect specimens unread and untouched then a Larson is not for them. But for the collector who is looking for a very nice, high grade, white paged comic that might have some writing and foxing, Larsons are perfect. Keep in mind though, that some Larsons are the best existing copy—even better than the Mile High or San Francisco copy (such as the *More Fun* #54). Larsons presently sell for around 2x *Guide*, but this varies for low-grade copies (2x *Grade Guide*) and for keys (3x to 5x *Guide*).

The David Fagiolla — Cosmic Aeroplane Collection

This collection surfaced for sale around early 1972, and was the first to become a pedigree. It was purchased by David Fagiolla, and originated out of Salt Lake City, Utah. The collection was amassed by an art teacher who used the comics as demonstrations to students during the 1940's and 1950's. This is evident upon examination of most copies from the collection, as they have check marks and occasional notes next to the panels of art inside.

After few early raids on the collection by Bruce Hamilton, Gary & Lane Carter, and Dale Broadhurst, the remaining books were sold to a local store in Salt Lake City called Cosmic Aeroplane Books, hence the pedigree name.

The overall grade of the Cosmic Aeroplane comics varied between a low of Very Good to a high of Very Fine, with many falling in the Fine grade. A few copies exhibit water damage and the overall page quality is a yellow to cream color. Despite this, the supple and clean nature of a Cosmic Aeroplane comic more than make up for the lower technical grade.

The collection numbered between 2,000 and 3,000. Many keys, such as *Flash* #1 and a water-damaged *Marvel* #1, were present in the collection. Even though the runs were spotty in some areas, they were consistent. The earliest books were from the 1930's, but the main period of accumulation was from 1945 into the early

1950's. There was only one Silver Age comic present in the collection: a true Mint 99 *Showcase* #4, which lacked the characteristic check marks. This particular copy of *Showcase* #4 is featured on the cover of the *Grading Guide*.

Cosmic Aeroplane Identification

Cosmic Aeroplane copies are the easiest to identify. As mentioned before, multiple check marks are usually present throughout the books, as well as on the cover. On occasion, people have tried to erase the obtrusive pencil marks, as they can be unattractive to some collectors.

Cosmic Aeroplane Value

Depending on grade, Cosmic Aeroplane copies usually bring 1.5x to 2x *Guide*, but higher grades can bring as much as 3x *Guide*

The Denver Collection

One of three pedigreed collections containing all #1 issues. In 1938 a woman residing in Denver, Colorado began buying various #1 issues and storing them, possibly for investment purposes.

When she passed away her estate was auctioned off in Pennsylvania and a family named the Leis won the comics for $9,000. They subsequently called some national dealers to sell the collection. After flying out to inspect it, Jim Payette and Joe Vereneault bought the collection, which totaled 151 #1 issues. Some of the big keys present included *Marvel* #1, *Batman* #1, and *Captain America* #1, and the overall grade was Near Mint. The collection was broken up and quickly sold at 2x *Guide*.

Denver Identification

No Denver books exhibit any markings upon which an identification can be made. But due to the rather small number of comics in the collection tracking the ownership of a Denver copy is, in most cases, quite easy. Any books in question can be compared with the original list.

Denver Value

Because of possible investment purposes, most Denver copies are strong Near Mint, but the pages tend to be slightly yellowed due to the moist climate in which they were stored. Denver copies now sell for 2x to 3x *Guide*.

The Allentown Collection

In 1987 a small collection of 135 books surfaced just outside of Allentown, Pennsylvania. The books were found by a man cleaning out his mother's closet. An antique dealer informed him that the comics might be worth money and the man subsequently contacted six national dealers. Jim Payette emerged as the top bidder, paying $70,000 for it. Despite the small number of books in the collection, the Allentown pedigree made a big impact by containing the best known copy of *Detective* #27 and *Captain America* #1. Other books of interest included *Detective* #28, 30, 31, 33, 34, 35, the best existing #29, and one of the best existing 38's. Also present was *Batman* #1-6, *Mystery Men* #1-16, *WonderWorld* #1-17, and a *Marvel* #1, all in Very Fine Near Mint condition. The Allentown collection originally sold for 1.5x *Guide*.

Allentown Identification

No markings of any kind exist on Allentown books, but similar to the Denver books, the small size of the collection and relatively late discovery allows an easy trace of ownership. Any books in question can be compared with the master list.

Allentown Value

Most of the books in the Allentown collection are Near Mint, relatively scarce and in very high demand. As a result, most of them bring 2.5x to 3.5x *Guide*

The Recil Macon Collection

In Abilene, Texas, 1990, this pedigree, similar in characteristics to the Lamont Larson collection, surfaced. The collector, Recil Macon, read comics during the 1940's and had a habit of writing his name on the books. Despite this, his collection was somewhat properly stored, as the collection exhibits white pages and beautiful colors and gloss. Unfortunately, they were stacked haphazardly, and many books were bent and became warped. As a result, cleaned and pressed Recil Macon copies are not uncommon.

In 1990 the son of Recil Macon began selling the collection off to Darren Wilson, a part time dealer in the area. The collection numbered in the thousands and consisted of many early Timely, Quality, and DC. A few keys present included *All-American* #16, *Captain America* #1, *Marvel Mystery* #2-30, and *Human Torch* #1. Once the books were acquired in 1990 a majority was sold to Greg Bulls.

Recil Macon Identification

The main method to identify a Recil Macon is to locate the name written on the book. The location varies; the name can appear on the front cover, back cover, first page, centerfold, inside front cover, or any combination and sometimes multiple times. The name is written either in Pencil or Pen. Also present on many copies is the distributor code Mid-C. Using these two distinct markings identifying a Recil Macon becomes relatively easy.

Recil Macon Value

The two main detractors of a Recil Macon copy can be either the name (especially when written several times or in pen) or the warping from improper storage. But because of the fresh appearance of the books, along with minimal technical flaws, Recil Macons are quite desirable and currently bring 2x to 3x *Guide*

The Hawkeye Collection

It surfaced in Mason City, Iowa around 1984. There were two primary buyers during the original disbursement: Joe Smejkal and Mike Tekal, two collectors who did not know each other. Two middlemen were involved, and the collection was sold piecemeal very slowly. As a result, very little documentation exists on the Hawkeye collection. To compound problems there are no indicative markings or characteristics associated with a Hawkeye book. What little is known about this collection came from Smejkal and Tekal themselves.

In 1984 a person named Leroy sold Smejkal a small batch of high grade DC's. Seeing that the books were gorgeous, Near Mint, white paged copies, Smejkal called Leroy back and bought as much as he could afford. Over the next few months Smejkal purchased a small batch of ten to twenty books at a time. During this time Leroy was selling to other collectors as

well, of whom Tekal was one. Tekal was purchasing books in a similar fashion as Smejkal, receiving about ten books a week, and paying only in cash. As it turned out, the original owner, completely unknown, had sold his collection to one person, who in turn sold it to Leroy. By estimate, there were around 1,000 comics in the collection, consisting predominantly of DC's and spanning the years 1939 to 1950. Some keys present included *All-Star* #3, *Superboy* #1, *Adventure* #72, *More Fun* #101, *Mask* #1, *World's Best* #1, and reportedly the best existing copy of *Captain Marvel* #1.

Six years later a second, smaller accumulation surfaced from the original owner, numbering about 100-150 books. Although exhibiting gloss and white pages typical of the first collection, the average grade was only about Fine. Smejkal purchased all of them and subsequently sold them to another collector.

Hawkeye Identification

Hawkeye copies exhibit no markings whatsoever. Because of this and a lack of a master list, Hawkeyes can be tough to identify. Fortunately, because Smejkal has owned the majority of them, he can readily identify most any books in question. Incidentally, Smejkal's Hawkeyes were stored in mothballs during the 1980s and have a very distinctive mothball smell. Although sketchy, this is one way to identify a Hawkeye previously owned by Smejkal.

Hawkeye Value

Hawkeyes are beautiful, Near Mint books with full gloss and extremely bright colors... and white pages. Many Hawkeyes are so comparable to Mile High copies that there is a report that one sold as a Mile High, but was eventually identified.

Originally, Hawkeyes sold for 1.5x to 2.0 *Guide*. This multiple now hovers between 2.5x and 3.0x of *Guide*.

The Windy City Collection

This one surfaced out of Chicago and was purchased by Gary Colabuono. The collection consisted of around 2000 #1 comics, and thousands of #1 magazines. Almost every single #1 comic that came out between 1937 and the Silver Age was in the Windy City collection.

In the early 1930's a mailman who made regular deliveries to a bus station newsstand told the owner he wanted to buy every new #1 magazine. After doing so for a couple of years the newsstand owner suggested he also try collecting #1 issues of comics as well. Following his suggestion, the mailman began purchasing the #1 comics each week. This went on for nearly 30 years until communication was lost between the two.

In the 1970's the newsstand owner's son, realizing the comics were worth money, attempted to locate the mailman by finding his name in an old yearbook. Successful, the son soon found out that the mailman had passed away, but his sister had saved everything he possessed, including the comics. Unwilling to sell them, the sister instead settled on trading them bit by bit for common items, such as a new microwave. When the son obtained the first batch of comics he brought them to show a local dealer who had just opened his store that particular day in September 1978—Gary Colabuono. In that first batch was the following books: *Superman* #1, *Batman* #1, *Captain America* #1, *Marvel* #1, *Detective* #1, *Silver Streak* #1, *All-Star* #1, *All-Winners* #1, *Wonder Woman* #1, *Daring Mystery* #1, *Mystic* #1, *Sub-Mariner* #1 and a few others. As he looked over it Colabuono thought to himself "and this is only my first day...what can tomorrow bring?" The son wanted to wait until he had received all of the books from the woman before he sold the collection. This was not accomplished until 1986, eight years later! By this time a few other dealers had caught wind of the collection and were making offers. The son ended up taking bids and Colabuono won the collection for $85,000, to be paid in three installments. The first batch received by Colabuono included many of the most sought after #1's and made its debut at the Chicago Con that year. The second batch yielded the key Fawcetts and was put up for sale at the San Diego con a month later. Finally, the lesser #1's were obtained a couple of weeks after that.

The sister eventually died years later, and about 1000 more #1 issues missing from Colabuono's purchase were present, but most were insignificant. The lot was auctioned off to an anonymous bidder.

There never was an *Action* #1 or *New Fun* #1 in the Windy City collection, although the *Detective* #1 is one of the best existing copies and one source claimed the *Marvel* #1 to be the third best existing copy.

Windy City Identification

Over half of the Windy City collection has the name "A. Wallace" written in pencil in the first letter of the title logo on the cover. There is speculation that the "A" stands for Anna, the name of the mailman's sister. For any copies that do not have the name written on the cover a master list exists for which comparisons can be made. As far as the extra 1000 or so comics found separately from Colabuono's purchase, very little is known, and no assumptions can be made concerning grade or markings.

Windy City Value

The grades of Windy City copies range from Very Fine to Near Mint with an occasional Very Good or Fine. A few of them exhibit brown pages, although the majority are structurally perfect with full gloss and white pages. The initial distribution sold for around *Guide* with high demand keys selling for 2x to 3x *Guide*. As an interesting note, the Windy City *Batman* #1, graded a VF+, sold for a record price of $13,400 at the 1986 San Diego Con. Now Windy City copies fetch 1.5x to 2x *Guide* and 3x to 5x *Guide* for high demand keys.

The Pennsylvania Collection

It surfaced about 15 years ago and was bought by Steve Geppi. Pennsylvania copies are well-known in the market, but very few collectors are familiar with its origin. Unfortunately, Geppi does not recall many of the specifics surrounding the discovery of the collection due to the length of time that has passed.

According to Geppi, a woman came to a convention in Philadelphia in the late 70s to sell some Golden Age comics. Word got back to Geppi, who tracked her down. He bought the collection, which consisted of several hundred comics from the early 1940s (1941-1945). Because the collection began after 1940 many of the prime Golden Age keys were not present, but the grade was extremely high. The books also had a characteristic smell to their pages. The collection was split up and sold later. Bob Overstreet purchased a rather sizable chunk of

the collection, where it remained until recently when his comics were put up for sale.

Pennsylvania Identification

Identifying a Pennsylvania involves simply locating a P written on the cover. The P sometimes looks more like an R , probably from the quick handwriting of the distributor. Another way to identify Pennsylvanias is by their pages characteristic smell. If ever in doubt of a Pennsylvanias authenticity, Steve Geppi is one collector who can probably identify it.

Pennsylvania Value

Pennsylvanias are structurally NM to Mint copies with white pages. They originally fetched slightly above *Guide*, but now can command prices as high as 3x to 5x *Guide*.

The Carson City – Comstock Collection

This group of books came out of Carson City, Nevada and was sold as two separate accumulations to two different dealers, hence the two accepted names of the pedigree. The first purchase was made by Mark Wilson.

In 1992 an old woman contacted Wilson via his mail order business in Washington state and offered him a few various comics she had found. Her husband had owned a tobacco and candy store during the 1930s and 1940s and saved practically every periodical that passed through his store. He had stored them in various shacks on his property, where they stayed until the 1990 s. His wife, deciding to clean the shacks out, threw all of the contents of one shack out, consisting of nothing but old newspapers. Upon cleaning out the second shack she noticed that inside each newspaper was another periodical, usually a magazine such as Life, or even a comic book. Upon discovering that some of the hidden periodicals held value she realized the fortune she threw away from the first shack.

Once contacted, Wilson quickly flew down to Nevada to purchase the comics from the second shack. The accumulation was small, about 50 books, but almost every comic was a #1 issue. In addition, the grade was immaculate and the page quality was beautiful.

As a gift Wilson gave the woman a new *Price Guide* and a set of Ernie Gerber's *Photo-Journal*. Upon inspection of the *Photo-Journal* the woman found Gerber s address and realized she was only about 30 miles away from him. She contacted Gerber and offered him the second batch of comics from the next shack she had since cleaned out after Wilson left. Gerber, unaware of Wilson's involvement at the time, gladly accepted. A deal was consummated, this time for about 200 comics, and Gerber left with the books. Wilson, expecting to purchase the second batch from the woman, tried to set up another visit, but she kept stalling.

Ultimately, Wilson discovered she had sold the books to Gerber. In spite of the woman's questionable handling of the collection, neither Wilson nor Gerber harbored any ill will toward each other.

The earliest books were from 1939 and continued on into the 1940s with a few stretching into the 1950s. Some highlights of the collection included a *Marvel* #1, *All-Star* #1, *Mystery Men* #1, *Science* #1, *All-Select* #1, *Boy Commandos* #1, and reportedly the nicest existing copy of *Big All-American* #1 and *New York Worlds Fair 1939*. The average grade was VF-NM and the page quality ranged from slightly yellow to stark white. The occasional yellowing of pages was due to the various placement of comics in the six-foot stacks of newspapers in the shacks.

Carson City Identification

Because there are relatively few comics in this collection, tracking the ownership of a copy in question is fairly easy. There are two other ways one can identify a Carson City copy as well. 1)Most of the comics in the collection had "No. 1" or "1" written on the cover, identifying it as the first issue in a series. 2)A date stamp can be found on a small number of authentic copies, usually on the back cover and in red or blue ink.

Carson City Value

Even though the Carson City collection is relatively small in size the magnitude of books in it are substantial enough to warrant a pedigree in many collector's eyes. This, coupled with the high grade and beautiful page quality, allows copies from the collection to fetch multiples of *Guide* when sold.

When the collection was first sold by Wilson the asking price for the books was 1.2x to 1.3x *Guide*, which was unheard of at the time. This was partially due to the slump in Golden Age comics during that period; the Marvel #1 was actually sold for under *Guide*. Since then, movement of copies from this pedigree usually results in multiples as high as 3x to 4x *Guide*, depending on the comic for sale.

The Blankis – Salida Collection

This is a relatively new pedigreed collection that was purchased by Bruce Ellsworth in 1994. The collection originated from Salida, Colorado and was amassed by an individual named Frank Blankis. Because Blankis was handicapped he was unable to join the service, but read war books faithfully. He also loved Disney books. This was evident from his collection, which consisted of a complete run of DC and Atlas war books from 1950-1969 (with the exception of 10 issues total, all from the same month/year), most of the other various war titles from other companies, and *Walt Disney Comics and Stories* #50210. The average grade was Very Fine to Near Mint. What is incredible about this collection is the page quality. I have to admit my skepticism upon hearing about this new pedigree, but when I saw my first Blankis-Salida book, I couldn't believe my eyes. To this day I have never seen whiter pages.

Ellsworth kept most of the collection, selling the bulk of the Atlas to one collector, and very little publicly. Included in the Blankis-Salida collection is one of the finest known copies of *Our Army At War* #1,81,83 and *Our Fighting Forces* #1.

Salida Collection Identification

Most of the Salida books have stamps on the back or front cover. Variations of the stamp exist, such as: "Fred's News Stand", "Nor-Colo.", and the actual subscription stamp of Frank Blankis. Because the collection is relatively new and very little has been sold from it Blankis Salida books are easily identifiable.

Salida Collection Value

Despite the specified nature of the collection, the completeness of the war genre and Disney

comics are impressive and the page quality is unsurpassed. Most books are technical NM and are the finest known copies to exist. Common Blankis-Salida books sell between 1x and 2.5x *Guide*.

The "D" Collection

In 1991 Steve Fishler began to buy piecemeal what would eventually become known as the "D" collection. A person had located many boxes of old comics in Nyack, New York and was bringing Fishler one box every two weeks. No one knows where the collection originated, but 99% of the books have a code written (possibly by a child) at the top of the first page. The collection ultimately numbered 1000, but there is reason to believe more comics were previously sold to other dealers. The range of the collection spanned from the late 1930's to the early 1950's. Some major keys present in the "D" collection included *Sensation* #1, *All-Flash* #1, *Captain America* #1, *Batman* #1, and *Detective* #28 and #29. The collection was initially distributed as a non pedigree and has just recently been dubbed the "D" collection because of the frequent "D" written on the cover and on the splash page.

"D" Collection Identification

As mentioned above, practically all of the "D" books contain a code written on the top margin of the first page. On occasion a "D" is written on the cover as well. Although most of the books exhibit foxing and a few have slightly tanned pages the books appear to have been unread.

"D" Collection Value

Because of the relatively new identification in the market "D" collection books still sell fairly close to *Guide*.

The Crescent City Collection

One of the newest pedigrees in today's market, the Crescent City collection surfaced in early 1995 from an individual residing in New Orleans. Growing up in California his main focus of reading was Disney comics, although he dabbled in various superhero titles as well. The collection numbered approximately 175 comics and is one of the few Disney pedigree collections. It contained the finest existing copies of *Walt Disney Comics and Stories* #1-3, and *March of Comics* #20 and #41, along with a VF/NM copy of *Four Color* #9, all of the Mickey Mouse and Donald Duck one-shots in Near Mint, and one of the best existing copies of *Batman* #11 and *Superman* #14. The collection was purchased by Bill Ponseti, Harley Yee, John Fairless, and Rob Hughes and was subsequently sold complete to a collector/dealer for an undisclosed amount of money.

Crescent City Identification

No markings are present on any copies from the Crescent City collection. Almost all books are strong VF/NM copies with white pages. Because practically none of the books has been sold separately identification is fairly easy. Any book whose authenticity raises questions can be compared with the original list.

Crescent City Value

What few have sold from the Crescent City collection have fetched 3x to 5x *Guide*.

White Mountain Collection

In 1984 a man walked into a comic book store named "The Million Year Picnic" in Cambridge, Massachusetts. He had with him twelve comics he was looking to sell. Upon inspecting the comics Jerry Weist, one owner of The Million Year Picnic, found the comics to be of superior quality, with extraordinarily white pages and colors. The man claimed to have many more just like them, and wanted to sell them off piecemeal. A while later the first portion of the man's collection was purchased, and consisted of a complete run of New-Trend and Post-Trend EC s, including the key Pre-Trends as well. Steve Geppi, overwhelmed by the incredible grade and page quality of the collection, promptly bought the whole batch from Weist for 2.25x *Guide*.

A couple of years later, the second portion of the man's collection was sold to Weist, this time consisting of a near-full run of Atlas, *Mystery in Space*, and *Strange Adventures*. Upon bringing them to San Diego that year, Weist met with Gary M. Carter, Bob Overstreet, and Mark Wilson. The three quickly gobbled up every single White Mountain DC Weist brought, with Overstreet buying a few select comics, Carter purchasing both DC Sci-Fi runs, and Wilson taking the rest. The collection had yet to reveal itself publicly.

The next year Weist was sold another batch, which contained the Marvel prehero runs. These were subsequently sold to Overstreet at 1.5 to 3,5 of *Guide* (depending on condition) with most going for 2.5 of high book.

Around 1988 the superhero Marvels became available. The *Amazing Fantasy* #15 and the *Fantastic Four* run, among others, were sold to a collector named Rich Hauser for 2.5x *Guide*. Another collector bought the *Journey into Mystery/Thor* run, and so on as the Marvels were split up. At this time Overstreet, Carter, and Bruce Hamilton felt the selling of the collection was a year too early. They thought the Silver Age market was not quite ripe yet.

Sure enough, the market began its surge upward in 1989, culminating at the 1993 Sothebys auction, where the *Amazing Fantasy* #15 brought $40,000 and the *Fantastic Four* #1 brought $28,000! In fact, Sothebys was where the White Mountain collection was showcased to the public for the first time. Following strong sales of White Mountain books in their 1991 and 1993 auctions it became apparent that the collection was fast becoming a nationally recognized pedigreed collection.

Strangely enough, there are still more books the man has yet to sell. In the 1996 Sothebys auction he will be directly consigning another portion of the White Mountain collection he has held on to. No one knows exactly what he still has left, although some expected titles have yet to surface, including the superhero Atlas. Only time will tell.

But how and why did this man amass his amazing collection of comic books? According to Weist, he loved to read comics, as well as science fiction material. His collecting years spanned from 1948 into the 1970 s. His love of science fiction becomes apparent when one observes the presence of the DC sci-fi titles en masse, yet all other DC titles were absent. He did not care for the Marvel superhero titles either, and did not even read them. As a result, when Weist received the *Amazing Fantasy* #15 and opened it, it made a small pop. Apparently Weist was the first to have ever opened the

comic book. This was true of many of the Marvels, and to this day many still have never been opened.

Once he bought his comics the man would carefully record the date on the first page of each comic, and would store them in large metal military boxes. The environment of storage was cool and dry, which resulted in extraordinary gloss, colors, and page quality.

All together, the White Mountain collection has so far consisted of nearfull runs of EC, Atlas, Avon, Ziff-Davis, and Marvel. About 50% of the Harveys and Fawcetts were also present, along with a nice run of *Planets* and most of the DC sci-fi titles. Gaps in these companies may turn up in the future as the collector is still selling portions of his collection.

White Mountain Identification

Identifying a White Mountain comic book is quite simple, as practically every one is marked with a date of purchase on the top of the first page. Up into the 1960s a stamp was used, although on occasion the date was hand written in ink. During the 1960 s the date was more frequently hand written on the cover. This is most prevalent on superhero Marvels.

White Mountains are also easily identifiable because of good sales records. Most copies can be traced back through Sothebys' auctions and Jerry Weist. White Mountains also carry a distinct smell in their pages, one of fresh ink and paper, due to their superb storage conditions.

White Mountain Value

The beautiful page quality and average grade of VF-NM is what makes White Mountain comics so famous. Also, because of the all-encompassing nature of the collection many rare comics from the 50s were present in very high grade. Currently, common books from the collection bring 3x *Guide*, while fabulous condition and high demand comics bring 5x *Guide* or more… with a few extreme examples at 10x and 12x *Guide*.

The Bethlehem Collection

A very large, predominantly Silver Age collection which surfaced from an individual's estate in 1990. A gentleman by the name of Stanley Pachon had saved practically every periodical during the 1950's and 1960's; novels, magazines, journals, children's books, and comic books were stacked throughout his house without ever being read.

Pachon died of a heart attack and his estate was subsequently divided up. Joe Rainone, a dealer out of New York was approached by the lawyer of the estate and was offered the collection.

After a short period of time Rainone and his partner Phil Weiss were able to view a portion of the collection, which contained many Atlas, EC, and other '50s companies, all in beautiful, high grade. Very little DC or Marvel was present, but a price of roughly $11,000 was paid for the first batch. A short time later, the rest of the collection became available, in which full runs of Near Mint DC and Marvel Silver Age was present. A price of roughly $20,000 was paid.

In all, there were 18,000 comics, mostly dating from 1950-1967. Included were full runs of EC, Avon, Atlas, ACG, Charlton, DC and Marvel. There were very few books missing from runs, and only eight of the key Silver Age books were absent: *Amazing Fantasy* #15, *Fantastic Four* #1, and *Flash* #105, among others.

There is some speculation that the missing keys were taken by the lawyer to make some money on the side. A few miscellaneous Golden Age comics were present as well, including *Fantastic* #1 and #3, *Planet* #1, a couple of *All-Stars* and a few *Buck Rogers*.

Most of the horror and Sci-Fi comics went to one collector. Many of the DC went to another. Aside from that, very little was sold or publicly advertised for the next couple of years. Rainone and Weiss divided most of the keys and high demand books between themselves. Over the years Rainone has sold many of his Bethlehems, while Weiss has kept most of his.

Books from the Bethlehem collection are overall Near Mint with yellow to white pages and occasional tanning on inside covers. Because the books were placed rather haphazardly in various stacks around the house, page quality varied from stack to stack, and dust shadows were prevalent.

Bethlehem Identification

Because very little of the Bethlehem collection was split up, tracking and identifying authentic copies is not very difficult. To further ease the task most of the 1950's comics are stamped on the back or front cover with place of origin: "E.J. Korry, Kodak-Film-Magazine-Shop".

In addition, arrival dates were stamped on the comics, generally black during the 1950's and red during the 1960s.

Bethlehem Value

What little of the collection has been sold has gone for 2x to 3x *Guide*. High demand keys have fetched multiples of up to 6x *Guide*. Of note, the *Jimmy Olsen* #1 and *Showcase* #9 both sold for $10,000 each a couple of years ago through the Christie's Auction.

In Conclusion

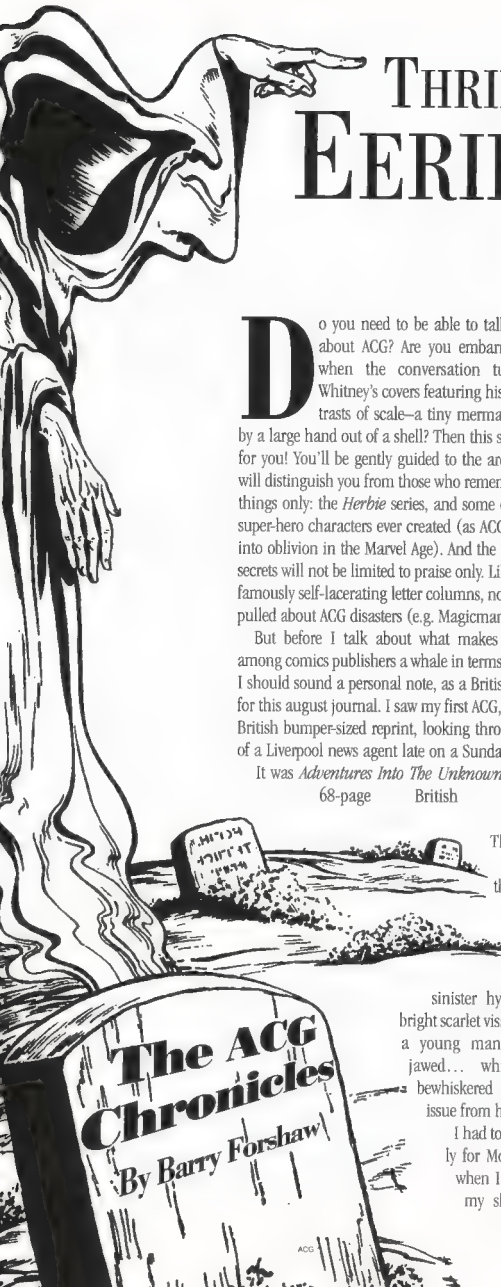
This compilation of pedigree histories and information on identification and demand has been the most comprehensive to date. Unfortunately, due to space limitations not all of the pedigrees in today's market could be discussed.

Most of these include: Chicago, Gaines, Indian Reservation, Ohio, New Hampshire, Busstop, Magic Lightening, Nova Scotia, Circle 8, Poughkeepsie, Green River, Mohawk Valley, Cooksville, More Fun, IRS, Chinatown, Oleshefsky, Bill Joe White, Hap Langly, Hal's Books And Magazines/Salt Lake City, Indian Reservation, Twilight, Denver II, Mile High II, and others.

Also, information listed here is objective and as accurate as possible. In some cases there were conflicting accounts of what happened, and so a happy medium had to be reached, usually by ejecting important, yet questionable material from the article.

Even though I have tried to cover all of the bases in the shortest amount of time, I'm sure there were a number of things I missed involving some of these collections. If anyone has any additional information or would just like to chat about pedigrees I would love to hear from you! Write to me care of *CBM*. ■

Thanks! I also have a long list of people I would like to thank for helping me gather the information necessary in putting this monster of a project together. Robert Beerbohm, Dan Bennett, Jon Berk, Gary M. Carter, Gary Colabuono, Stuart Degraff, Bruce Ellsworth, Richard Evans, Steve Fishler, Steve Geppi, Ernie Gerber, Pat Kochanek, Mike Manyak, Nick Marcus, Jim Payette, Bill Ponseti, Joe Smejkal, John Snyder, Mike Tekal, Joe Vereneault, Phil Weiss, Jerry Weist, and Mark Wilson.



THRILLING TALES OF THE EERIE UNKNOWN!

Do you need to be able to talk knowledgeably about ACG? Are you embarrassed at parties when the conversation turns to Ogden Whitney's covers featuring his trademark contrasts of scale–a tiny mermaid being shaken by a large hand out of a shell? Then this section of *CBM* is for you! You'll be gently guided to the arcane secrets that will distinguish you from those who remember ACG for two things only: the *Herbie* series, and some of the very worst super-hero characters ever created (as ACG slid reluctantly into oblivion in the Marvel Age). And the analysis of those secrets will not be limited to praise only. Like Hughes in his famously self-lacerating letter columns, no punches will be pulled about ACG disasters (e.g. Magicman and Nemesis).

But before I talk about what makes this "minnow" among comics publishers a whale in terms of achievement, I should sound a personal note, as a British correspondent for this august journal. I saw my first ACG, in the form of a British bumper-sized reprint, looking through the window of a Liverpool news agent late on a Sunday night in 1961.

It was *Adventures Into The Unknown* #5 - actually a 68-page British reprint

The cover sent thrills through my adolescent soul: a massive close-up of a sinister hypnotist, with a bright scarlet visage, gesturing at a young man sitting slack-jawed... while a ghostly bewhiskered face seemed to issue from his head.

I had to wait impatiently for Monday morning, when I could shell out my shilling for this "unmissable" item. In the shop, I was momentarily detained by the air-brushed pubic regions of the nudist magazine *Health and Efficiency*, but I made the right choice - a future-defining moment every bit as powerful as reading a black & white reprint of a Wayne Boring drawn "Superman's New Face" from *Action Comics*. Like all post-code ACGs, this was gentle, poetic fantasy.

The panel on the cover, "Annals of the Occult", (a generic series title for the company) was not as eerie in Kurt Schaffenberger's crisply illustrated tale, but the plotting was totally involving.

However, the real find was a tale called "Pie in the Sky", in which I noticed the signature of the marvelous cover artist, Ogden Whitney. The science fiction plot revolved around an investigator uncovering the strange secret behind a job agency that appears to be abducting lonely, alienated people. I was as much struck by the care in characterization as the beautifully rendered art. The hero actually underwent a personality change–from cynicism, to bitter disillusion, to a qualified hopefulness. This was a novel concept for comics in the late fifties/early sixties, where clever plotting was far more valued than characterization.

Even the great DC Sci Fi titles (*Mystery In Space* and *Strange Adventures*) opted for plots of great ingenuity, but enacted by largely undifferentiated scientists and astronauts.

Because the British edition of *Adventures Into The Unknown* eliminated both the ACG logo and any publishing information, I (along with every other British reader) had no way of knowing that Richard Hughes was the writer/editor of this superior fare.

There was a chatty letter column–a rarity in those days –but the unidentified editor was railing against the cliché excesses of horror comics. When readers pleaded for zombies, werewolves, and vampires (a familiar leitmotif of ACG letter columns, as I was to learn)–Hughes would assume a "school marm" tone and say "such themes have been done to death–we'll be giving our readers the very best in imaginative illustrated fiction."

This was undoubtedly true... ACG's gentle, wistful eerie

tales seemed infinitely better than the shop-worn horror tales of Stan Lee's Atlas line. But it ignored three single facts.

1) Readers were capable of enjoying EC's first-rate gruesome tales alongside ACG's more restrained stories. (Some horror comics still sporadically surfaced in the UK, even though EC was dead.)

SKULL of the SORCERER
ALL HALLOWS' EVE-- HALLOWE'EN-- THE NIGHT WHEN WITCHES RIDE-- WHEN STRANGE SPECTERS RISE FROM THE CLAMMY VAULTS OF THE UNKNOWN! BUT OF ALL EERIE HALLOWE'EN TALES, THERE'S NONE MORE SPINE-TINGLING THAN THE STORY OF THE SORCERER'S SKULL!

THIS AL WILLIAMSON SPLASH panel begins a beautifully-rendered story from *Forbidden Worlds* #3 (Nov/Dec 1951), a sleek seven-pager that makes that issue "extra-collectible".

2) Hughes was really not publishing horror tales because of something called the Comics Code… A thing we were dimly aware of in Britain. We'd experienced our own hysterical mini-witchhunt against horror titles which cited another bumper-sized black & white US reprint, *Tales from the Crypt*.

3) Most ironically of all, the English reader (who'd come to *Adventures Into The Unknown* via these post-code British reprints) had no idea he was reading the very first regularly published horror comic, albeit in a de-fanged version!

Still, a lifetime of love for these exquisite supernatural fantasies beckoned from beautifully crafted pages–*Forbidden Worlds* would soon follow in a black and white Brit edition–and adult enthusiasms for Chandler, Thomas Hardy, Conrad, and H.G. Wells would never dim the frisson of opening an ACG comic. And I hadn't even seen the US color originals that lucky Americans took for granted!

THE BRIT AIU #1

The CBM editor tells me that many US readers are now interested in the curious byways of British reprints, so for those fact-oriented types, I should say that the first British ACG reprint was published by Thorpe & Porter as *Adventures Into The Unknown* #1, and reprinted as *AIU* #88. The cover featured a menacing Neanderthal brute in a tale called "The Booster Shots." Twenty issues were published–the last reprinting was *AIU* #107 (a battle between a witch and a spaceman, one of Hughes' beloved bizarre juxtapositions, in a tale called "A Bridegroom for Jenny").

The British edition of *Forbidden Worlds* ran a mere eight issues, the first being a reprint of *FW* #70, with a striking Whitney cover depicting a young man staring in horror at his aged reflection in a shop window ("Beyond the Reach of the Past"). The final UK issue of *FW* lead with the tale "The Golden Doom", with another Hughes standby–pirates (my least favorite of his pet themes).

The statement "BIG 68 PAGES–DON'T TAKE LESS" added to UK editions meant that the "cover issues" were supplemented by other random ACG reprints, and amazingly even DC Sci Fi fare. Subsequently, Alan Class reprinted much inferior editions of later ACG material on paper of an appallingly low quality–I pity later generations whose introduction to this great material was via this era.

THE SAD & TRAGIC FINAL YEARS

The sad and tragic final years of many of the great comic book creators is a subject mused over by many a fan… the sorry fate of Siegel and Shuster has been often re-told… although Neal Adams managed to claw something back for them after the rough treatment they'd had.

But it's less well known that one of their protégés, Wayne Boring, enjoyed little respect in his twilight years. The definitive Superman artist of the Silver Age ended his days as a night watchman after his summary dismissal.

And the great Wallace Wood, taking his own life, destroyed by the feeling he was yesterday's man. (although

Harry Harrison, a collaborator in his EC days, before Harrison's success as an Sci Fi novelist, once told me that Wood always had this death-watch beetle in his soul.)

Richard Hughes

And then there was ACG's Richard Hughes... It's sobering to think that one of the finest writing and editing talents the industry ever had finished his life replying to letters of complaint for the New York Department store, Gimbels. A career that had embraced humor, horror, adventure, romance, Sci Fi, fantasy and super heroes (the latter, however, hardly his finest hour) ended up in a job of drudgery.

Right from the start, Hughes' exceptional writing skills were flourishing, even if they were only burnished to their brightest hue in the Silver Age.

In that regard, consider the third issue of *Forbidden Worlds* (November/December 1951). This is a highly interesting and very collectible issue for many reasons, but to the real ACG cognoscenti (as every reader of *CBM* undoubtedly is), it's most intriguing for Hughes' contribution. Ironically, for the man behind the first regularly published horror comic, Hughes was never really at home with the genre. Feldstein and Gaines' contemporaneous efforts at EC were similarly rough edged and over-written–the latter a fault Hughes eradicated only when the introduction of the Comics Code forced an inauguration of his finest period.

But Hughes, more quickly than his competitors at EC, began to find the quirkiness and invention that became his hallmark. While his two horror titles were rapidly outshone by the team at Entertaining Comics, his early efforts amply demonstrate this teeming imagination. The first story from *FW* #3, "Lair of the Vampire" is actually pretty ludicrous when examined closely. It works primarily because its writer, subtly out of tune with the horror genre, tries to fashion several new "wrinkles" to liven up his narrative. A conventional tale of a young couple marooned in central Europe (and menaced by a vampire at whose inn they unwisely stay), the ridiculous elements of the piece start to stack up pretty quickly.

The first panel is both striking and inaccurate. It depicts the hero about to impale the "undead" predator swooping down on his wife with the speared top of an axe!

Then examining panel four, it's hard to suppress the chuckles. The couple blithely rent a room from an innkeeper whose pointed ears and death-white skin seem to give them no pause for concern at all. And when the vampiric innkeeper delivers the nudging line about a nearby castle "I flit back and forth quite frequently!" the reader suspects that this isn't in the class of Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho,* when Anthony Perkin's hints "Mother isn't quite herself tonight".

But however little Hughes' rather dim couple deserve to survive their ordeal, Hughes manages to build up quite a head of steam in the ensuing battle, with the development of genuine suspense.

The climax may be ridiculous (the hero offering himself as bait by climbing up a flagpole, and dispatching the monster by the unlikely expedient of simply ducking out of the way, and letting "flagpole impalement" ensue), the concept is still fun. And Hughes even plays fair with his readers by showing a then-unexplained glittering object on the castle in an early panel. The object ultimately turns out to be the silver lightning-conductor tip of the flag pole on which the vampire dies.

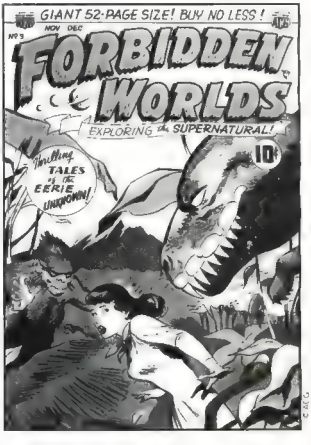
There's also the nice concept of the castle, tottering on a spindly crag from which all roads have fallen away. And the pillow the hero secretes about himself before his climb to the monster's lair–and then uses ingeniously. Forgetting the sillier elements, it's a lively and crisp early fifties horror tale that has a real page-tuning quality.

Under-Rated Ogden

Things take a definite turn for the better, however, in the second story, drawn by ACG's greatest artist, the much-under-rated Ogden Whitney. It's hard to think of another illustrator so closely associated with a particular company–even Curt Swan in his glory days at DC wasn't as definitive a cover artist for that company as Whitney became for ACG. And although this *Forbidden Worlds* tale doesn't quite show the final refinement of his clean, ordered style (the antithesis of Graham Ingels and Jack Davis at EC), there's a real pleasure to be had from these measured panels.

The splash suggests a horror tale… an axe-wielding man staggers back from the blue specter of a woman emerging from a wine cask… but the reason this is far more successful is the fact that it's essentially a ghost story (Hughes' forte). The violent death at the end could easily have been accommodated to the Code had the story been published six years later. Not that I'm advocating censorship, it's just that Hughes (unlike Feldstein and Gaines) positively thrived under the restrictions of the Code. In fact he was finally able to produce the kind of non-violent fantasy and supernatural narratives that were clearly closer to his heart.

In "The Vengeful Spirit" we have the kind of off-the-wall premise that Hughes could so often come up with. A young couple (again) enjoy a bottle of Château Mariveaux 1941 in a Parisian restaurant, only to be confronted with the seduc-



FORBIDDEN WORLDS #3 (Nov/Dec 1951) has a dreamlike dinosaur cover that isn't tied-in to any of the inside stories. In addition to tales illustrated by Williamson and Whitney, there's a bizarre A-bomb blast yarn called "Domain of the Doomed".

tive apparition of a woman that emerges when the cork is pulled. After several draughts of the wine, she passionately kisses the hero, whispering "Go... go to the Châteaux Mariveaux... there you will find *me* !"

Romantic Not Erotic

This theme of a beautiful ghost appealing to a living man long after her death was to become a staple Hughes theme in the post-code era. It was always handled with a romantic (rather than erotic) freshness. Here the ghost's appeals are frankly sexual, when it transpires that she's been promising bliss to all who will visit the châteaux at her call . "Your... your lips... I.. I can't resist you!" murmurs the hero. If there's a "hook" on which Hughes built the story, it's clearly the idea of a spirit in the "Spirit" (i.e. alcohol).

It's novel enough, but is given extra impetus by an early example of Hughes' marvelous character-defining flashbacks or preludes. Here, the ghost woman is revealed in a lengthy flashback to have been a resistance fighter, murdered by her ruthless brother for the Nazis. (This "texturing" of a story made all ACG readers feel they were really getting their money's worth). Whitney's depiction of her revenge killing of her brother is a reminder of the non-ACG horror work he was to do - usually in a more heavily cross-hatched style than he used for his principal employers.

After the letter column (with none of the famous lecturing of the readers that was to follow - mainly because they were actually getting the werewolves and vampires whose post-code demise they were to lament) we find "The Domain of the Doomed" illustrated by a mainstay of ACG's early years, Kenneth Landau (no... NOT the brother of Martin). Hughes was clearly a fan of science fiction, but like Ray Bradbury, he was more interested in its dramatic or poetic possibilities than any hard science credibility. Larry Niven or Gregory Benford this ain't.

In fact, the premise here–a hot air balloon that makes a hazardous interplanetary trip–more than strains the credulity of the reader. But it's energetic fun–even if Landau's art, as always, veers alarmingly between being strikingly composed and crudely drawn.

Williamson and Wood

No such problems with the next tale, illustrated by two of the greatest talents in the history of the field–EC's Al Williamson and Wally Wood. Williamson did some customarily powerful work for the company through both its horror and post-code periods, and with Wood's beautiful inks over Williamson's elegant pencil work, a conventional tale called "Skull of the Sorcerer" is elevated into the realm of memorable masterpiece! (A "muddy" black-and-white version of this tale appeared in a reprint tribute to Williamson.)

The final story in *FW* #3, "The Witch's Apprentice", is a dud! But with the exception of the DC Sci Fi comics, the 52-pagers of the era often carried dead weight!

Looked at from the 90's, it's clear that Richard Hughes and the company for which he was the prime mover had great things ahead. And it's all the more sad that this protean talent finished his life replying to complaints about faulty toasters.

More from the ACG Chronicles in a future *CBM*! Thanks for reading. ■

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WRITERS OF THE PURPLE SAGE

By Michelle Nolan

Did you ever have a hankerin' for stories of "unbridled passion and death-defying devotion in the lawless country where primitive emotions held sway!"? How could anyone resist that kind of blurb about lurid tales of lust in the dust?

For a short time nearly 50 years ago, one of the most curious experiments in comic book history corralled enough readers to create a short-lived sub-genre that mixed school-marms and six-guns.

There hasn't been a western romance comic published in 40 years. Just about the only readers who remember them today are grandmothers, whose grandchildren are almost surely more into computers than cowpokes.

But return with us now to those thrilling days of yesteryear, when love briefly rode the four-color range.

The earliest dime novels of more than a century ago were often historical romances of the Old West, and throughout the 1920s, '30s and '40s western romance was a staple of the pulps. The writers of the purple prose plied their trade in such magazines as *Ranch Romances* (which survived perhaps longer than any other pulp), *Thrilling Ranch Stories*, and *Rodeo Romances*.

But until super heroes began to wane in popularity after World War II, western heroes had not taken a big shot at comic books, although western themes were common in anthology titles. A few multi-media characters such as The Lone Ranger and Hopalong Cassidy had comics devoted to their adventures, but these were the exception rather than the rule.

When publishers began expanding their experiments with different genres in the late 1940s, both western comics and

FOR A SHORT TIME NEARLY 50 YEARS AGO, ONE OF THE MOST CURIOUS EXPERIMENTS IN COMIC BOOK HISTORY CORRALLED ENOUGH READERS TO CREATE A SHORT-LIVED SUB-GENRE THAT MIXED SCHOOL-MARMS AND SIX-GUNS. RETURN WITH US NOW TO THOSE THRILLING DAYS OF YESTERYEAR, WHEN LOVE BRIEFLY RODE THE FOUR-COLOR RANGE.

romance comics began to enjoy a bonanza of sales—a gold strike that lasted with dozens of titles throughout the 1950s and even well into the 1960s.

Why not do what came naturally then, and combine the range with romance? Several publishers seemed to hit on this formula almost simultaneously a few months into 1949, including Crestwood (Prize), National (DC) and Fawcett, followed by several others within a few weeks.

Simon & Kirby, who created the romance genre for Crestwood (Prize) in 1947 with *Young Romance Comics*, also apparently had a hand in turning out the first western romance comic, *Real West Romances* #1, dated April/May 1949 on the cover, but dated May/June in the indicia. Beginning with the third issue of the seven-issue run, S&K began receiving production credit on the first page. They also penciled a few of the stories, but the work is nowhere near as vibrant as in *Young Romance* and *Young Love*, their companion comics for Crestwood.

Fawcett followed with *Cowboy Love* #1 in July of 1949. DC was right behind with *Romance Trail* #1, dated July/August 1949. Within months, as part of the "Love Glut" of the 1949-50 period (see Nolan's Notes in *CBM* #27), 13 publishers had lassoed a part of the romance comics market.

But the romantic roundup was brief, indeed, in part because of the general "Love Glut" and in part because the western romance market became thoroughly saturated. The fad actually lasted only one year before most of the romantic western comics disappeared forever, except for those of us who delight in collecting off-the-wall parts of comic book history.

By the time Fawcett's *Cowboy Love* appeared for the last time with issue #11 in 1951 (no month given), the only western romance comics being published were two quarterlies, *Western Hearts* from Standard (which lasted through issue #10, March 1952) and *Cowgirl Romances* from Fiction House (which ended with issue #12, Winter 1952-53). Indeed, the reason these

COWGIRL ROMANCES #10 (Jun 1952) This couple has a lot to contend with on this typically lush Maurice Whitman cover.

COWBOY LOVE #3 (Sep 1949) A strummin' serenade makes a nice bright photo-cover for this early Fawcett entry.

two titles held on as long as they did may have been that all the others were gone.

(By the way, Fiction House's *Pioneer West Romances* was merely a continuation of its *Firebair* title and not a western romance comic.)

Charlton, which acquired the rights to most of Fawcett's titles after Fawcett stopped publishing with issues dated January 1954, did publish reprints in four issues of *Cowboy Love* in 1955 (issues #28-31) before turning the experiment into a regular romance comic. And it was circa 1958 when IW, the bandit reprint house of the late 1950s and early 1960s, reprinted Avon's *Frontier Romances* #1, the infamous book cited in Dr. Fredric Wertham's *Seduction of the Innocent* for "erotic spanking in a western comic book."

That was not the only western romance comic with a spanking scene, but by the time Wertham's tome appeared in 1954, it had been four years since there had been anything of that nature in any western title.

Altogether, in the period from 1949-52, there were 85 western romance comics in 21 titles from 13 companies, plus the four later Charlton issues and two IW reprints (I've never seen the *IW* #9 listed in *Overstreet*, so I have no idea what it reprints, or if it exists). So that makes collecting western romance comics a practical proposition (no pun intended). I've managed to acquire 75 of the 89 issues (not counting the IW reprints).

There are two drawbacks to collecting western romance comics, however—they tend to be overpriced for the contents (most of them are more garish than good) and they seem to be scarcer than most comics from the same period. But that only adds to the fun of the hunt.

The resourcefulness of the publishers was sometimes stretched to the limit by their quick jump into the western romance field. Two great examples are the photo covers of *Golden West Love* #2 from Kirby Publications and *Range Romances* #5 from Quality Comics.

The woman on the cover of *Golden West Love* #2 is Ruth Roman, leaning on a modern mailbox and looking as though she had come straight from working in the garden or maybe dusting the den. It's actually from the classic 1949 boxing film, "Champion", starring Kirk Douglas. *Range Romances* #4 featured Bill Williams and Jane Nigh from "Blue Grass of Kentucky", a horse-racing flick. The gal on the front of *Range Romances* #5 is Gloria Henry, a starlet featured in "Kill the Umpire" —an amusing baseball comedy starring William Bendix!

Then there was the curious case of *Popular Teenagers Secrets of Love* #10 (January 1952) from Star Publications. The usual gorgeous L.B. Cole cover disguises the fact that the entire issue consists of western romance stories (!), perhaps left over after Star abandoned the field with the publication of *Flaming Western Romances* #3 (March-April 1950). I spent years and years looking for *Flaming Western Romances* #1 and #2, until finally learning that issue #3 was continued from *Target Western Romances* #106 and #107 (which in turn were continued from Target Comics). Whew… and you wonder why some comic collectors seem a bit balmy?

Speaking of resourcefulness, the immortal Monogram film stars Whip Wilson and Reno Browne (each featured in their own short-lived comics from Marvel), appeared simultaneously on the covers of three different romance comics from three different publishers! These were Crestwood's *Real West Romance* #4 (October/November 1949), Marvel's *Western Life Romances* #1 (December 1949) and Standard's *Western Hearts* #1 (December 1949). Two years later, Standard used the same photo cover from *Real West Romance* for *Western Hearts* #9.

Fawcett was really reaching when it fea-

tured a "Ranger Rider of the Month" on the back of three issues of *Cowboy Love*. Somehow, one wonders what action stars Rock Lane, Monte Hale, and William Boyd must have thought about that, considering their films usually contained more affection toward horses than women!

Then there was a case of either frugality or a frantic scramble to meet a deadline by Fawcett, which reprinted "The Tall Stranger" from *Cowboy Love* #1 less than six months later in the company's other western romance title, *Romantic Western* #1.

"The Tall Stranger" was typical of the story titles, which tended to be either (a) generically normal such as that one, (b) outrageously metaphoric such as "Rustled Rapture" in *Range Romances* #5, or (c) takeoffs on the western love theme, such as "Frontier Flirt" in *Range Romances* #4.

My favorite titles include "Cowtown Casanova" in *Western Love* #4 (spelled "Cazanova" with a "z" on the cover!), "Wild Hosses and Ornery Women" in *Real West Romance* #1, "The Blacksmith and the Belle" in *Romantic Western* #3, "Daughter of the Devil's Brand" in *Cowgirl Romances* #3, and "Two Hearts Against the Vigilantes" in *Cowgirl Romances* #10.

As far as stories go, nothing tops "I Was a Lady Bandit!", a bizarre 10-page opus in Marvel's *Western Life Romances* #2. I'd bet the ranch that this was penned by Stan Lee, because it's sheer fun. It's the tale of Belle Chance, who sees her father killed by a crooked sheriff and vows to avenge his death. But she doesn't get the chance, because a handsome hoodlum steals Belle's heart, convincing her that she can gain her vengeance with a crime spree against the criminals.

She becomes a costumed villain (!), calls herself The Vixen and sees her hoodlum boyfriend kill the crooked sheriff. Realizing the fellow is a genuine bad guy, she is seeking a way out when an honest-to-goodness sheriff comes along, discovers her identity, and threatens to put her away even though they are falling in love. At that point, Belle is forced to kill her bad ex-boyfriend to save her new heart-throb's life. She surrenders to him (ahem!) but he gives up his law enforcement career—putting a bullet into his badge!—in order to ride off into the sunset to a new life for both of them.

They just don't write 'em that way any more, do they, Stan?

There was only one series in a western romance title, the "Molly Adams Tales of Harmony Ranch" in all six issues of DC's *Romance Trail*. Most of these were illustrated in whole or in part by Alex Toth, and they're worth the price of the book. Molly was a kindly old soul who tried to help star-crossed lovers. The first three issues also feature stories by Everett Raymond Kinstler, one of the more underrated artists of the late 1940s and early 1950s.

It's interesting to note how restrained DC was in its cover blurb for *Romance Trail*—"True-to-Life Stories of Heartbreak and Happiness in the Golden West". Compare that to the blurb in the lead to this column, which came from Quality's *Range Romances* #2. But then, even in matters of the heart, DC was always restrained and in good taste.

In perhaps the most outrageous transition to a western romance theme, Ace Publication literally wrote off Sheriff Sal, an Annie Oakley-like heroine who appeared in *Western Adventures* and in the first issue of its successor, *Western Love Trails* #7.

After much hemming and hawing, Sheriff Sal falls in love with a fellow and decides to let him have the job. Why? Because they intend to get married! And that was the last we ever heard of Sheriff Sal, who no doubt was busy with babies instead of bullets from then on.

The longest western romance story was the only one to come from Dell Comics. In March, 1951 a *Four-Color* one-shot (#324) entitled "I Met a Handsome Cowboy", takes no less

CBM CHECKLIST

Western Romance Comics

Ace
Western Love Trails #7-9, Nov 1949-Apr 1950

Avon
Frontier Romances #1-2, Dec 1949-Mar 1950 #1 reprinted by IW in 1958

Charlton
Cowboy Love #28-31, Feb 1955-Aug 1955

DC
Romance Trail #1-6, Jul/Aug 1949-May/Jun 1950

Dell
Four Color #324, March 1951 (I Met a Handsome Cowboy)

EC
Saddle Romances #9-11, Nov/Dec 1949-Mar/Apr 1950

Fawcett
Cowboy Love #1-11, Jul 1949-1951 (no month)
Romantic Western #1-3, 1949 (no month)-Jun 1950

Fiction House
Cowgirl Romances #1-12, 1950 (no month)-Winter 1952-53

Kirby
Golden West Love #1-3, Oct 1949-Feb 1950

Marvel
Cowboy Romances #1-3, Oct 1949-Mar 1950
Romances of the West #1-2, Nov 1949-Mar 1950
Western Life Romances #1-2, Dec 1949-Mar 1950
Rangeland Love #1-2, Dec 1949-March 1950
Love Trails #1, Dec 1949 (Does #2 exist?)
Cowgirl Romances #28, Jan 1950 (#1 in indicia)

Prize
Real West Romances Vol.1 #1-6, Vol. 2 #1, Apr/May 1949-Apr/May 1950

Quality
Range Romances #1-5, Dec 1949-Aug 1950

Standard
Western Hearts #1-10, Dec 1949-Mar 1952

Star
Target Western Romances #106-107, Oct/Nov 1949-Dec/Jan 1950
Flaming Western Romances #3, Mar/Apr 1950
Popular Teenagers Secrets of Love #10, Jan 1952 (all western romance stories)

than 50 pages to tell a tale adapted from the 1943 Ranch Romances serial, "Clouds Over the Chupaderos". Having succeeded with its Zane Grey adaptations, Dell apparently was testing the waters of western romance. But by then, the fad had passed.

One of the most beautifully drawn western romance tales is in *Cowgirl Romances* #12, the last issue. It's a signed, eight-page piece by Maurice Whitman entitled "Ranch of Riddles". Whitman, who did so many wonderful covers for Fiction House in its final years, didn't do many interior stories, so this one is a real find!

In spite of all we know about this sub genre, one western romance "mystery" remains: Is there a *Love Trails* #2 from Marvel, as indicated in *Overstreet*? I have never seen confirmation of its existence. Any information either way would be much appreciated!

As far as scarcity goes, it's tough to say. The most common books seem to be the ones from Fawcett, Crestwood, Standard, and Fiction House. DC's *Romance Trail* isn't really rare, but it is tough to put a complete set together. The 11 different Marvel issues (covering six titles) are part of no fewer than 31 different Marvel romance titles that appeared from January to March in 1950! They are scarce if only because they glutted the market and didn't sell well (fully 26 of those titles were canceled as of April of that year!).

At any rate, if you're gunning for a collection of western romance comics, happy trails to you! ■

FOUR COLOR #324
(Mar 1951) Dell's 50-page novels began on the first inside page and continued straight through the 48 pages and ended on the back covers.

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THE MATT SCHIFFMAN REPORT

Gold still solid; Silver continues upward!

Are you happy to be beyond the holiday season? Many retailers certainly are. If you tend to deal in graphic novels or the newer material, the lackluster sales this past Christmas was a surprise compared to 1994. Those that deal mainly in Silver and Gold have come to expect a slowdown at this time of year. How many of these books are actually given as gifts? Unfortunately for the dealers (and for us), most of our loved ones have come to the realization that if we died-in-the-wool fanatic collectors can rarely locate and afford the book we really want... and odds are good that our loved ones aren't going to be able to either. At least you'll look sharp at the next convention in your new sweater.

Over the past few months, I've noticed a trend developing in the Golden Age market. Collectors are now making contact with each other and developing their own resource pool. Although many dealers do have the books that are being sought after, they were often required to pay much higher purchase prices to obtain these books, lower their profit margin, and then ultimately sell at higher prices. The result is that some collectors are turning to each other for book exchanges. What this present trend holds for the collecting community should be interesting to see.

Golden Age

Gold is still very solid and firming up with more uniform prices. Seldom do I hear of a book sold for many, many multiples of Guide when an equivalent sells for around Guide. Buyers are becoming more astute about the market and market prices. Books that seem to be selling at multiples of Guide are continuing at those levels, while others find their own niche, and collectors are telling me that they are happy to see a predictable level in which they feel comfortable to purchase.

Golden Age Sales: Detective #41 FN $1,725; Prize Comics #2 VF+ $895; Classic Comics Illustrated #2(0) FN $700; Magic Comics #1 ap VF $1,000; Submariner #10 FN/FN+ $780; More Fun #71 FN $2,100; Batman #2 VG+ $3,500; Silver Streak #6 VF/NM $25,000; Pep #1 FN $2,495; New Book Of Comics #1 VG/VG- $4,800; Mary Marvel #1 VF- $650 World's Finest #3 VF $2,500; All Select #5 FN $800; Marvel Mystery Comics #5 GD $2,000, #14 VF- $2,200; Sensation Comics #6 FN+ $920; OK COMICS #1 VG/FN $695; Plastic Man #1 FN $1,998.

1946-1956 Material

The pace has continued unabated as collectors continue to search out the unique and truly scarce. Fox romance books lead the way, as do the last few issues of any superhero title. Too many years of these books dumped into bargain bins have caused their already low print runs to dwindle even further. Condition seems to be less of a factor as collectors just try to get their hands on "anything" and worry about finding better copies later (if that's possible).

Sales: Fight Against Crime #12 VF+ $135; Men's Adventures #28 NM- $700; Phantom Lady #17 FN $3,100; Famous Crimes #2 VF/NM $300; Jungle #163 NM $210; Vooda #20 VG $98; New Romances #11 FN $60; Meet The New Post Gazette Sunday Funnies Dick Tracy VF- $265; Jo Jo #7 VF $650; Leading #33 FN- $95; Crimes By Women #3 VG $159; Strange Mysteries #1 FN $200; Negro Romance #1 VF- $1,100; Navy Combat #1 VF/NM $150; Marvel Tales #104 FN $200; The Hand Of Fate #19 VG $95.

Silver Age

The uptrend continues onward, and dealers are seeing a great resurgence in mid to high grade DC and high grade Marvel books. Over the last year we saw a few collectors "dump" their books for bargain prices and move into Gold. Those that picked up these "castoffs" are very pleased *continued on page 77*

TIM COLLINS • RTS UNLIMITED, INC.

GOLDEN, COLORADO

The New Year is here! I think 1996 will be a great year for the comic book industry! I expect more record prices for a strong, vibrant and healthy back issue market. I think many new collectors will enter the back issue market for Silver and Golden Age books. I also expect that these new collectors will be a diverse group (e.g. more women) and will have varied tastes.

For example, we have developed a huge selection of "off the wall items" and have developed a market for such odd balls as Hot Stuff the Little Devil comics. These new collectors are also collecting Sugar and Spike, Wonder Woman, Spider Woman, Casper, Movie/TV comics, and cheap titles like Weird War Tale. I think these markets should be encouraged in order to attract new people... instead of just marketing to the Super-Hero crowd!

Denver area retailers are still struggling with new issue sales. Accordingly, they are branching out into other markets such as games, videos, and of course, "collectible card games." And again, the few retailers that cater to Golden and Silver Age books are doing much better.

Bronze Age - Sales of these books are really picking up, and the more obscure horror and war titles are gaining ground.

Silver Age - The momentum seems to be slowing here, however sales are still strong. Ten cent DC's are the best sellers. Wonder Woman, Justice League of America, Batman titles and Superman titles are the best. Low and medium grade books move at or just below Guide quite well. Marvels are also doing well on the higher dollar end.

Notable sales: Amazing Spider-Man #17 VF/NM $445; Fantastic *continued on page 78*

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JOHN CHRUSCINSKI & BRUCE ELLSWORTH • TROPIC COMICS

PLANTATION, FLORIDA

We bought a large Silver Age collection of over 10,000 comics along with 20,000 newer comics. Average condition was VG/FN with nice groupings of Gold Key, DC and Marvel.

Recent sales: Showcase #4 GD $1300; X-Men #1 GD $550; Fantastic Four #15 FN $100, #4 & #5 GD (the pair) $400; Giant Size X-Men #1 VF $275; Astro Boy #1 GD $50.

Golden Age sales are brisk with a lot of people searching for lower grades (they're more affordable). We bought about 65 GA books and have about 40 left after 2 days!

Recent sales: Super Duck #1 (cool cover) VG $100; Funny Funnies #1 VG $50; Four Color #16 VG $6000; All-American #16 GD+ $10,000.

I have noticed a lot of activity in Gold Key, Archie, and MAD recently... maybe a jump is on the horizon. Berni Wrightson was in the store this weekend and all I can say is that his artwork is astounding. Thanks for the wonderful weekend Berni and Joy! And that is all for this time... seeya!

GREG WHITE • COMIC BOOKS & COLLECTIBLES • KISSIMMEE, FLORIDA

Happy holidays! Welcome to Central Florida! Here is our year end report. 1995 will be remembered as a good year. A few nice collections came in and we were able to sell a reasonable number of books and artwork. Hopefully '96 will be a great year.

Silver Age (1956-1969) - Continues to be steady. Purchased a few lower grade runs this past month. High grade keys are asked for but often times are not affordable. We recently set up at a show in Orlando with every Marvel key for sale! We had plenty of lookers but few serious buyers. Many collectors demand like-new Silver Age and then expect you to sell at 25% below Overstreet. Wake up collectors... it doesn't work that way. DC Silver is steady if not exceptional.

Sales: Amazing Spider-Man #2 VG $295, #28 VG $500; Showcase #38 FN $150; Tales of Suspense #59 VF $150; Batman #171 VF $295; Fantastic Four #7 VF $400.

Golden Age (1935-1955) - No terrific acquisitions lately, but on the whole 1995 was a big year for picking up older material. Some books have sold well (Timely, DC and pre-hero)) while others have not moved at Guide. We do not believe that Golden Age in general are booming sales-wise. Certainly particular issues are always quick sales, but in general, your middle of the road 1940's books, even when priced at Guide (or a little below) are not moving rapidly. This opinion is a result of mail order, convention and retail store activity.

Sales: Batman #33 VG $250; Tip Top #23 VG- $300; Four Color #62 FR $100 and More Fun #56 VG $750.

Toys and Artwork - We purchased a small group of 1960's Corgi automobiles and a few Captain Action items recently. Sales in this area have been slow as of late. No artwork has come in this month. We maintain a nice selection of vintage Disneyana, animation art and some 500's and 600's comic and sci-fi related toys. Of a more recent nature, Star Wars toys are selling very well.

Sales: Mickey Mouse daily strip $195; Batmobile Corgi $1500; Wolfman Aurora (boxed) $300; Hanna-Barbera Flintstone Kids cel $50.

That is all! Happy New Year!

VINCENT ZURZOLO

VINCENT'S COLLECTIBLES
BELLE HARBOR, NEW YORK

On a recent trip to buy a high grade Silver Age Marvel collection (which I ultimately purchased and have for sale) I sat and pondered what I loved about comics and why I don't have the same feelings for today's books. As I got farther away from New York and the radio stations got worse and worse, it hit me. Other than the stories themselves, which I found less contrived and full of innocence untainted by the marketing of today's books, it was the ads!

Yes, the ads. Tell me O True Believer how cool those old ads are! You could get rippling muscles in 6 weeks and in those same 6 weeks master judo and Jiu Jitsu. Yes, you too can buy a pet monkey for $18.95, or a miniature dog (Chihuahua) for about the same price…wow, what a deal! 100 army soldiers could also be yours for a mere pittance. My favorite ad is one from the '70s…it went something like this: 3 fishing poles, a net, a tackle box, and about a gazzillion lures for $12.95. I wished when I was seven years old that I had $12.95 to buy all of that crap. But thank the good Lord I didn't—I'd probably be writing an article for Field And Stream and not the grand old CBM! In closing I think these ads go hand in hand with the great stories they accompanied and made comics reading special.

Acquisitions: I have recently acquired two large Golden Age collections (both original owners) and a large Silver Age collection, including: GA Green Lantern #1, All-Star #1 & #2; Batman #2; Torch #5 & #8; All-American #19 and approximately 400 other Golden Age books. The Silver Age collection was all high grade and included such titles as Amazing Spider-Man, Avengers, Captain America, Daredevil, Fantastic Four, Iron Man, Journey into Mystery and X-Men. The odd thing about the Silver Age collection is that the seller had marked on the back of every backboard the day he purchased the book and what he paid for it!

Sales: Amazing Spider-Man #4 VF/NM $1537,#12 VF/NM $512, #14 VF/NM $1600, #25 NM- $250, #27 NM- $343.50, #28 VF+ $350, #29 NM+ $162, #41 NM/NM+ $156, #43 NM $93, #44 NM- $93, #45 NM $61.25, #47 NM/NM+ $100, #49 NM $100, $52 NM $75, # 53 NM $66.75, #55 NM $75, #96 NM $85, #101 NM $160, #102 NM $110; Avengers 9 VF/NM $75, #15 NM $118, # 20 NM $58; Captain America #109 NM $76, #110 NM $76, #111, NM $76; Daredevil #13 NM $63, #17 NM $102, #18 NM $55; Fantastic Four #1 VG $1900, #6 NM $1575,#7 NM-/NM $712, #9 NM+ $712, #20 NM+ $337, #22 NM $137 #24 NM $137, #42 NM $62, #43 NM $62, #44 NM $62, #47 VF/NM $71, #50 NM+ $237, #53 NM $70,#55 NM- $78.75, Iron Man #3 VF+ $75; Journey into Mystery #114 NM $62, #115 NM $900, $119 VF/NM $65, #120 NM $77, #121 NM $70, #122 NM $700, #123 NM $77, #124 NM $85, #125 NM $700; X-Men #6 NM $385, #9 NM $268, #11 NM- $261.75, #14 NM/NM+ $300, #22 NM $81, #23 NM $80, #24 NM $800, #26 NM $80, #28 NM+ $120, #30 NM $73.25, #37 NM $53.25, #39 NM $55.75, #64 NM $52.

SCHIFFMAN REPORT CONTINUED

with their purchases and those that attempted to collect Gold at the pace they collected Silver were rudely awakened. Many are back in the Silver marketplace again.

Sales: Journey Into Mystery #83 FN+ $925; Hulk #1 VF $9,000, #1 FR $155; House Of Secrets #160 VF/NM $150; Action #304 NM $32; Adventure #327 NM $50; Brave & Bold #28 FR $125; Star Spangled War Stories #138 NM $120; Our Army At War #83 FR $185, #151 VG $65; Fantastic Four #5 VG $600, #48 NM- $1,200; Amazing Spider-Man #50 FN $100, Green Hornet #1 VF $100.

1970s Material

Early '70s collectors are proceeding to push the market upward and onward. A new approach has emerged and collectors are taking the time to ascertain the true scarcity of this material. Is there stockpiles of this stuff around and were the print runs really that low on certain titles? Once collectors feel confident in their conclusions, they charge ahead with little regard for Guide prices. DC seems to edge out Marvel right now, which means that the DC titles were so awful then that they were losing sales to the Marvel books, although the Marvel books seem to have the higher prices right now. It will be very interesting to see just how many of these books will crack the $100 mark by the spring convention season. The list is already growing at an amazing rate…

Sales: Marvel Feature #1 NM $110; Batman #234 VF/NM $135, #181 VF $38; Star Spangled War Stories #151 NM $85; Human Torch #1 NM $18; Hulk #181 NM $350; House Of Secrets #204 VF/NM $15; Detective #437 NM $25; Action #422 NM $10; Adam 12 #1 VF/NM $35; Night Nurse #4 NM $55; All Star Western #10 FN $70; Marvel Team-Up NM $125; Worlds Finest #215 NM $25; Sinister House Of Secret Love #1 NM $40; Marvel Feature #4 NM $20; X-Men #94 VF/NM $300; Amazing Spider-Man #136 NM $50.

Auction Injection

The slowdown that usually occurs did happen in November, but with the auction by Continental Comics and World's Finest in December, results and prices gave a boost to the market. Both auctions had such great material that collectors were figuratively forced to pay attention to comics. Next month we'll look at the results from those two auctions and see just how winter is shaping up for collectors. Last year we had the Diamond International Galleries Vault opening (with the Overstreet Collection) in January and that certainly turned the traditionally slow months of January-March into an active market.

See you next month and we'll take a look at what's in store for us. ■

RICHARD EVANS • BEDROCK CITY COMICS

HOUSTON, TEXAS

Hope everyone had a great holiday season Our market has been consistently steady for the last month to six weeks. Nothing extremely exciting but by no means slow either.

Golden Age Sales. Marvel Mystery #92 VF $1600; Amazing Mystery Funnies V2 #4 NM (Mile High) $2000; Batman #43 VG/FN $200; and Captain Marvel #47 VG $45.

Sales of 1950's material: Mask of Fu Manchu VF/NM $750; Weird Tales of the Future #1 NM+ $900; Hooded Menace FN $115; Two Fisted Tales #26 VF/NM $100; Dick Tracy #50 VF $40 and Harvey Comic Hits #51 VF $100

Silver Age Sales: Amazing Spider-Man #21 VF $150; Silver Surfer #4 VF $275; Hulk #5 VG/FN $275; Journey into Mystery #84 VG $120; Tales to Astonish #35 FR $40 and Fantastic Four #1 VG $1500

TIM COLLINS CONTINUED

Four #2 FN $675, #5 VF $1500 (to another dealer!), #17 FN/VF $108 and #20 FN/VF $121.50.

Golden Age - This part of the market is very strong and record prices are being realized in almost every area. It is a feeding frenzy out there!

Notable sales include: All Winners #14 VF/NM $625 (1.5X Guide), Amazing Mystery Funnies #1 VG/FN $1500 (2X Guide), Boy Commandos #1 GD+ (IRS copy) $300; Batman #5 VG with loose cf $800, #17 GD- $148; Captain Aero Comics various numbers low to mid grade 2X-5X Guide; Dumbo the Story of the Flying Elephant FR (IRS copy) $72; Leading Comics #2 VF (Mile High w/slight silver fish damage on front cover) $2100 (3X Guide); Marvel Mystery Comics #17 VF/NM $1700 (above Guide); Target Comics #7 VG- $900 (almost 2X Guide) and USA Comics #1 VF $7000 (almost 2X Guide).

Tim's Tip of the Month: Tape flaps of your comic bags down at a slight angle. This will make it much easier to remove the tape without tearing!

News Flash: RTS Unlimited, Inc. is now on the Internet! Check us out at http://www2.csn.net/~searls/rts.html. Till next month, work hard and enjoy your comics!

SCOTT WHALEY AND MARNIN ROSENBERG

ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA/GREAT NECK, NEW YORK

Before we begin, we'd like to say thank you to the Comic Book Marketplace for our advisor status and allowing us to pontificate our views in this very enjoyable publication.

Obviously, 1995 has been a landmark year, an awakening of the Golden Age market within the first half of '95, followed by a resurgence of the Silver Age market. But more important, hundreds and maybe thousands of new collectors are discovering this wonderful, enjoyable, fascinating and very profitable hobby.

Since we've formed a partnership, this has been our greatest year yet, not only because we've uncovered more high grade books than ever before, but also a greater number of new collectors spending even greater amounts of money than we could have ever imagined. Whether it is a good thing or bad thing, many of these new collectors are in it just for the investment and obviously the money... they could care less about these books from an enjoyment standpoint.

Sales: Amazing Spider-Man #8 NM, #11 NM, #12 VF+, #14 NM/NM+, #15 NM (White Mtn), #14 VG/FN, #36 NM+, #19 NM, #20 NM-, #34 NM (White Mtn.), #40 VF+, #41 NM/MT, #44 NM+ (White Mtn), #45 NM (White Mtn.). Journey into Mystery #85 NM-, Fantastic Four #9 NM, #50 NM-; Daredevil #1 GD/VG, Action #28 VF-/VF, Metal Men #1 VF/NM; Tales of Suspense #39 FR/GD; Human Torch #12 VF+; Silver Streak #7 NM-; Incredible Hulk #3 VF; Fantastic Four Annual #1 NM+, #2 NM/MT; All of the above books sold for between 80% of Guide (books FN/VF and below) and 1.5 to 3X Guide (books VF and above)

The new Overstreet Comic Book Price Update has pushed Golden Age comic prices to what some have described as "alarming" levels. Our only regret is that the higher the price tag goes on a particular book, the smaller the audience becomes. It's gotten to the point that the Mega Books with the Mega Price tags will change hands only within a small group of collectors and dealers. These new escalating Golden Age prices will certainly result in a strong Silver Age market and create more interest in lower grade Gold than ever before.

In the past year, the number of collectors have increased... and so too their choices in a greater number of dealers. Many dealers who previously had the marketplace pretty much to themselves are now sharing it with newer dealers who have developed significant followings and substantial reputations. This is good because, as in other market arenas, the "cream" eventually rises to the top and the "carnival barkers and circus con men" eventually fall by the wayside. This is one of the most positive aspects of our highly competitive marketplace.

The future of this hobby is as bright as a super nova. It's a hobby we both love very much. We thank all of you who collect and read Comic Book Marketplace and for making it as successful as it is. Happy New Year! ■

Collectors should note that the opinions expressed in CBM Market Reports are solely those of the individual dealers and collectors who contribute them. Comic book values and prices listed here are listed here subject to the above conditions. Seasoned hobbiests are acutely aware that comic book and collectible prices and values vary based on geographic location, time of year, and a number of other marketplace factors.

(Continued from page 8)

ball comics) is OK, but an issue on a particular person or comic is too narrow for my personal tastes (Don't get mad). Thank you

Rollin M. Wilson, Indiana

A Damn Cheek?

I recently bought issue #28 of your publication Comic Book Marketplace, and really enjoyed reading it. For a while now I've been starved of reading material regarding my favorite comic era, the Silver Age.

At 31, I suppose I'm pretty young as a Silver Age fan, but here in England we used to get the '60s Marvels reprinted in the early '70s in black and white. These stories hold a lot of warmth in me, and even now when I think back to some of them I feel a glow inside. In particular the Spider-Man story where he is trapped under the machine (#31 I think), Jack Kirby's Thing in the main splash page from #51 and those Avengers stories beginning with the Powerman two-parter (#21?) up to about #59 or #60.

Anyway, I've not written this to come across as soft in the head, but I ask do you sell back issues? I've tried everywhere here, but no luck. There is also the problem of dollars/pounds because for me to buy, say two issues at $5 each , I'd pay as much for a money order from the bank. Do you have any ideas? I'm afraid that in the north of England we don't part with money easily!

If I don't hear from you I'll assume you think I've a damn cheek, but don't worry, I'll still buy the new issues as they come out.

Yours faithfully (and hopefully)

Paul Fearn, England

Give me a jingle, Paul, we can work out this "Cheeky" back issue question!

Remembering L.B.

I am writing to express a great sorrow for the passing of L. B. Cole. On Tuesday, December 5th, L. B. Cole passed away succumbing to a massive heart arrest. He had been hospitalized for the past few months rehabilitating from a fall he sustained at home. Unfortunately, he was unable to ever return to his home after this accident. His wife, Ellen, remained strong and inspirational and kept a daily vigil spending most of her time with Leonard at the hospital. Our sympathy extends to her and his family to embrace such an untimely loss.

Leonard touched many lives through his magnificent career and will always remain with those that knew him. His sense of humor and keen wit was remarkable and his perspective of live was to live to the fullest. That he did, and influenced many along the way. His work will remain forever as well, and not only stands the test of time, but was years ahead of its time. We are still catching up with his unique and magical creations today.

Secondly, I am writing on behalf of those who reserved orders with Argo City Company for hand-signed phone cards. Regretfully, L. B. Cole had not had the chance to sign our phone cards as we solicited. We will announce at a future date our intentions for those special Artist Editions. The regular editions of 1000 of each image will still be available. We thank you that responded in advance for your understanding. Sincerely,

Ken Barnes, Pennsylvania

I share your sentiments, Ken… thanks for letting us know the sad news. I spoke with Leonard not long before he entered the hospital and he was in his usual enthusiastic spirit. Few of the great artists I have known had his cooperative and genuinely kind spirit. Another of the greats is gone forever. Leonard's immense talent and knowledge will be sorely missed… My thanks to everyone who wrote in this time. Please note that CBM reserves the right to edit letters selected for publication for length and/or content. If you'd care to write, send communications to:

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Some of the feedback so far from people who are helping with it:

"…I am in favor of any serious effort to keep the unique quality of comic book distribution from deteriorating."

—Will Eisner

"…Gives a sense of the problems involved in owning/running a comic book store…and the direct impact it has on the industry in general including the creative/editorial people, as well as the publishers.

—Joe Kubert

"…I think your coverage of the early history of comics (publishers) makes a marvelous compliment to the main body of the Who's Who in American Comic Books…your writing is extremely well done and very interesting…it would be an honor to add your name to the Who's Who Editorial Board."

—Jerry Bails

"…"Origins" reads fairly well…"

—Mike Friedrich

"…I basically agree with what you have written about (and) how it all began…"

—Bud Plant

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MARKETPLACE ADS

Mac Raboy Flash Gordon original Sunday pages wanted. Any year. Immediate cash on hand. Top dollar paid. Wanted by collector Bill Howard 415-578-7570 (24 hrs.)

For Sale: Planet Comics #7 VG/VG+ $395; wanted to purchase All-New Comics and America's Best #18. Cotact Jon Berk c/o GMF 10 Columbus Blvd., Hartford, CT 06106 860-525-5361.

Collector looking for high grade (VF or better) EC Annuals: Weird Science Fantasy Annuals #1 & #2-1952,1953; Tales of Terror Annuals NN 1951 and #2- 1952, #3-1953; Strange Tales Annual #1; Secret Origins #1 Bill Howard 415-578-7570 leave message anytime. references available.

For Sale: All Star #1 App. VF/VF+ $6900; Hulk #5 VF/VF+ Arr. date $1199; Detective #30 VG/VG+ chipping on right edge; Tales of Suspense #39 VF $2700; Spider-Man #28 NM- $675; Adventure #88 NM- $815; Fantastic Four #18 VF+/NM $199, #23 VF+/NM $115, #24 VF+/NM $115; Mystery Comics #1 NM- $830 (Schomberg cov.) Marvel Mystery Comics #83 NM- $889; ShockSuspenstories #1 VF+ $699. Torchy #1 VF/NM $750 Paul S. Martinez 619-295-1221.

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